

AVANCE[®]

Unlocking America's Potential

AVANCE Parent-Child Education Program External Impact Evaluation Technical Report



INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

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Intercultural Development Research Association

Mission: The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent, non-profit organization that is dedicated to assuring educational opportunity for every child.

Vision: At IDRA, we develop innovative research- and experience-based solutions and policies to assure that (1) all students have access to and succeed in high quality schools, (2) families and communities have a voice in transforming the educational institutions that serve their children, and (3) educators have access to integrated professional development that helps to solve problems, create solutions, and use best practices to educate all students to high standards.

Functions:

Policy and Leadership Development – IDRA policy and leadership development promotes accountability and responsibility. Using inclusive, cutting-edge and broad-based strategies, we develop leadership within communities, schools and policy-making bodies to create collaborative and enlightened educational policies that work for all children.

Research and Evaluation – IDRA research and evaluation advance educational policies, programs and practices. Using collaborative and innovative methods, we investigate important questions and provide insights into compelling educational issues. As a national resource, we set standards in the design, analysis, and synthesis of timely and useful research involving diverse populations.

Professional Development – IDRA professional development causes people across the country to take action that empowers others. We assist people to create educational solutions through innovative, participatory, and hands-on presentations, workshops, and technical assistance that promotes sustained growth and development.

Our assistance values the needs and cultures of our participants and acknowledges their experiences. We carefully craft training designs that include reflection and application. IDRA professional development causes participants to take a new look at persistent problems and equips them to take action that produces positive outcomes for all children.

Programs and Materials Development – IDRA programs and materials cause people across the country to improve education for all children. Our programs produce results. Our materials are useful and timely; attractive, cost-effective and intuitive; linguistically, culturally and developmentally appropriate.

IDRA pro-actively disseminates cutting-edge information to educators, administrators, decision- and policymakers, parents and community leaders.

AVANCE Parent-Child Program External Evaluation Technical Report

Picture on cover – Dolls created by AVANCE mothers at Houston chapter

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AVANCE Parent-Child Education Program External Impact Evaluation Technical Report

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Parent-Child Education Program External Impact Evaluation Report Executive Summary

AVANCE is a 501(c)(3) non-profit parent-child education and family support organization headquartered in San Antonio that continues to provide innovative education and family support services to predominantly Hispanic families in disadvantaged communities since 1973. Dedicated to promoting school readiness and supporting families through a two-generation approach, AVANCE serves as a national model and a best practice reference for early childhood education in economically distressed, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and has excelled in creating a parent component where parents strengthen their parenting skills, elevate their educational levels, increase their knowledge about available resources, and enhance their opportunities in the workplace.

AVANCE PCEP is a two-generation program that seeks to advance (hence its name) both young mothers and their infants, zero to 3 years of age, so that: (a) mothers increase their knowledge and confidence about their child-rearing skills and in their own achievement in life; and (b) their infants attain optimal development and are ready for school. Young (below 30 years old), minority (98 percent Hispanic), economically distressed (37.1 percent earn less than \$20,000 per year), and under-educated (60.8 percent did not complete high school) mothers constitute AVANCE PCEP target population of about 4,000 families.

AVANCE's catalytic support is accurately placed on mothers and their children, corroborating with a body of research that demonstrates the connection between maternal education and child outcomes (Magnuson & McGroder, 2003). Other research supporting AVANCE's focus underscores the fact that one in five children in the United States lives in poverty, while more than two in five are low-income (Redd, et al., 2011). More women are primary breadwinners for their families, supplying at least a quarter of the family's earnings (Boushey & O'Leary, 2009).

AVANCE requested the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), a nationally-recognized non-profit education research organization, to conduct an external impact evaluation of the PCEP program. The evaluation involved telephone and face-to-face interviews with a sample of 199 mothers who graduated from the program between the years 1999 through 2006 and who mirror the socio-economic, ethnic and educational characteristics of the AVANCE parents at large. IDRA interviewed parents from April to August 2013. The evaluation involved

quantitative methods (using data from the extensive telephone survey of participants and a database created with their historic data) and qualitative methods (using data derived from participants' face-to-face in-depth interviews and information from an archival review of program documents). The evaluation was designed to address the following overarching question: *How does the AVANCE PCEP affect two-generation (parent/child) behavior change in the areas of education and socio-economic status?*

Summary of Key Findings

AVANCE moves parents and their children toward success and a pathway to better education and economic security through a parent-child education approach. Reviewing the data and the case studies generated through interviews with participants revealed highly effective strategies that help mothers and their children seize opportunities to move up the educational and economic ladder, often breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Participants reported that involvement in AVANCE PCEP gave them a chance to find and develop their voice through classes, groups and supportive activities, often leading to a lifetime of commitment as volunteers in their local schools or in seeking careers in education.

The review of AVANCE PCEP participants shows a highly effective model of a two-generation approach that is creating opportunities and meeting the needs of parents and their children *together*. This is a highly effective strategy insofar as parents' level of educational attainment, particularly post-secondary education, is a strong predictor of economic mobility. Thus, the return on AVANCE's investment in this approach and on early childhood education for at-risk mothers and children is significant over time in the following areas:

- building educational support for both parent and child;
- providing economic support through financial classes, information and other supports that can help lead a parent to getting a better job in the future or for planning for longer-term financial stability; and
- social capital in that AVANCE builds on the strengths and resilience of the families they serve that helps bolster the aspirations parents have for their children and for themselves.

Overall, this has a cumulative positive effect on helping mothers pursue skills and encourages them to complete their education and ultimately improve their own economic security and stability. This results in a lasting and impressive legacy for AVANCE PCEP

participants effecting the economic security and educational success that will pass from one generation to the next. AVANCE is helping to build a positive vision for the future with a pathway to success that helps mothers and their children achieve their dreams together.

The poignant case studies that evolved in this evaluation revealed great resilience, a sense of hope and determination for the future, often surpassing great barriers and challenges of the past. Many mothers expressed their desire for a better future for their children and themselves and a growing sense of self-efficacy to make a positive difference in the lives of their children. This spirit was generally expressed for every parent that had to overcome hardships, learn new skills in parenting and child development, and defeat economic conditions to create a pathway to a better life. Their commitment to education was unwavering for themselves and for their children, and their hopes were bolstered that their children would fare better as a result of their participation in AVANCE. The AVANCE PCEP gave them new strategies and solutions and a set of childrearing skills that helped them build new relationships, bridge the gaps they had experienced in the past and generate solutions to move forward with effective actions. Many expressed the need to complete high school, obtain a GED or pursue post-secondary education. They recognized that education was vital to obtaining a job that offers family-supporting wages.

As a result of this external evaluation of the AVANCE PCEP, many recommendations are offered in the body of the report. However, the main recommendation, not surprisingly, is for AVANCE to continue implementing PCEP because of its extraordinary success fulfilling the needs of the most precariously at-risk families, unlocking their potential toward a brighter future for them and their children.

AVANCE Parent-Child Education Program External Evaluation Report

Introduction

This report constitutes the result of an independent external evaluation of the AVANCE Parent-Child Education Program (PCEP). AVANCE contracted with the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) to conduct an impact evaluation of the PCEP for parents who graduated from the program between the years 1999 through 2006. The evaluation was designed to address the following overarching question:

How does the AVANCE PCEP affect two-generation (parent-child) behavior change in the areas of education and socio-economic status?

To answer this question, the study addressed the following five focus areas, pertaining to the AVANCE graduates and their children:

- knowledge of child development and parenting skills,
- support for two-generation education and growth,
- employment and income levels,
- homeownership and entrepreneurship, and
- barriers, lasting effects and suggestions for improvement.

AVANCE is a 501(c)(3) non-profit parent-child education and family support organization headquartered in San Antonio. AVANCE has continued to provide innovative education and family support services to predominantly Hispanic families in disadvantaged communities since 1973. Dedicated to promoting school readiness and supporting family engagement, AVANCE serves as a national model and a best practice reference for parent education and in early childhood education for parents, teachers, researchers and policymakers. Derived from the Spanish word meaning “advancement or progress,” AVANCE is committed to unlocking America’s potential by strengthening families in impoverished communities through effective parent education and support programs, as indicated by the organization’s mission.

Mission

Unlocking America’s potential by strengthening families in at-risk communities through effective parent education and support programs.

AVANCE Parent-Child Education Program

According to AVANCE literature, the Parent-Child Education Program (PCEP) is AVANCE’s signature program that provides parents with the tools to become active participants in their child’s life while providing children zero to 3 years of age with the education needed to become prepared and engaged students.

AVANCE emphasizes the preventive character of PCEP and the fact that it is community-based and two-generation focused. The PCEP concentrates on parenting education, family support, early childhood development, brain development, literacy and school readiness. The free, nine-month curriculum consists of weekly parent education classes with topics addressing the importance of reading, effective discipline and balanced nutrition. A unique element of the program, educational toy making, promotes teaching through play and encourages personal connections among participants. This activity aims at reducing stress (which often impedes effective parenting) while promoting self-sufficiency to parents. Home visits, nutritious meals and transportation are other significant model components that play an integral role in the program’s overall design. In addition, the PCEP provides parents with the opportunity to participate in adult literacy classes that better prepare them to obtain a General Educational Development Diploma (GED), enroll in English as a second language (ESL), or attend college.

AVANCE recognizes the fact that research shows the first three years of a child’s life are the most important developmentally. During this period, the brain creates billions of cells and the intricate system of synapses or connections responsible for vision, hearing, language and higher cognitive thinking. Ultimately, the experiences a child has during these critical years greatly impacts brain development. AVANCE recognizes these early learning experiences begin at home. Through the motto, “Parents are the first teachers and the home is the first classroom,” and its well-rounded curriculum, the PCEP assists parents in crafting a cognitively enriching environment in their homes that greatly benefits the intellectual development of the child. All of this is implicit in the organization’s vision.

Vision

We envision a future where we live in a world where children and parents advance to their full potential, transforming the communities in which they live.

Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

The AVANCE PCEP has undergone scientific evaluation prior to this. For example, a Carnegie-funded study was completed in 1992 and revised in 1995. That evaluation involved two annual cohorts of women followed for two years at two separate program sites. The study also included matched control groups. After completion of the program and one year later, evaluation data were collected for both groups. Data included maternal knowledge, behavior, attitudes and continuing education.

Questions, however, that were not answered by the previous study concern the long-term effects of the program on participants, such as: What happened to program participants seven to ten years after they exited the program? Did their lives improve? Were their children successful in school? These were the questions this evaluation intended to explore. Therefore, the overarching question for this evaluation is, for participants that graduated from the program seven to 10 years ago: *How does the AVANCE PCEP affect two-generation (parent/child) behavior change in the areas of education and socio-economic status?*

The scope of the evaluation is detailed in Exhibit 1. The overall outcome of the project is an evaluation that reveals the long-term effects of the PCEP on the participant mothers and their children, in terms of the five focus areas outlined in the scope of work. These focus areas summarized the 11 sub-questions listed under Task 1 of the scope of work. The second task was to conduct the actual data collection activities, followed by Task 3, conduct data analysis. Finally, all findings are presented in this evaluation report.

Exhibit 1: AVANCE External Evaluation Scope of Work		
Task No.	Evaluator Task Description	Deliverables/Refinements
Overall	Major tasks and evaluation activities will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and conduct an outcome evaluation of the AVANCE Parent-Child Education Program to assess changes in the education and socio-economic status of program graduates. 	IDRA will develop and deliver an outcome evaluation for the AVANCE Parent-Child Education Program.
Task 1	Prepare a work plan that outlines IDRA’s approach and methodology for conducting the outcome evaluation. [Planning/Designing the Evaluation] 1.1 Develop and refine evaluation research questions and sub-questions.	Evaluation research overall question and evaluation sub-questions grouped into five focus areas for the purpose of

Exhibit 1: AVANCE External Evaluation Scope of Work

Task No.	Evaluator Task Description	Deliverables/Refinements
	1.1.1 Overarching Evaluation Question: How does the AVANCE Parent-Child Education Program (PCEP) affect two-generation (parent/child) behavior change in the areas of education and socio-economic status?	presentation of findings
	1.1.2 Sub-question 1: Did PCEP graduates (adults) report an increased knowledge of child development and parenting skills?	Focus Area 1
	1.1.3 Sub-question 2: Did PCEP graduates (adults) report regular reading activities with their children? Did they become active readers?	Focus Area 2
	1.1.4 Sub-question 3: Did PCEP participants enroll in literacy, ESL, GED or college classes after completing the parenting program?	Focus Area 2
	1.1.5 Sub-question 4: What was the employment status of PCEP graduates before and after the completion of the program (unemployed, part-time, full-time, etc.)? What are the current income levels of PCEP graduates?	Focus Area 4
	1.1.6 Sub-question 5: What was the homeownership status of PCEP participants before and after the completion of the program?	Focus Area 4
	1.1.7 Sub-question 6: How satisfied were PCEP graduates with the services they received? What do PCEP graduates say about the impact of PCEP on their and their children's lives? What do PCEP graduates say about business start-ups and success and investments?	Focus Area 4 Focus Area 5
	1.1.8 Sub-question 7: What were the barriers that impeded parent or family participation? Did PCEP graduates consider dropping out of the program? What do non-graduates say are the reasons they left the program prior to completion?	Focus Area 5
	1.1.9 Sub-question 8: What actions or steps were taken to address barriers that impeded parent or family participation?	Focus Area 5
	1.1.10 Sub-question 9: Did PCEP graduates (adults) report that their pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children demonstrated school readiness following their family's participation in the program?	Focus Area 1
	1.1.11 Sub-question 10: What is the current education and socio-economic status of PCEP child graduates? What do PCEP graduates report about their children's school readiness, school	Focus Area 1 Focus Area 3 Focus Area 4

Exhibit 1: AVANCE External Evaluation Scope of Work

Task No.	Evaluator Task Description	Deliverables/Refinements
	<p>attendance, promotion rates, high school graduation rates, higher education enrollment, college graduation rates, employment status, etc.?</p> <p>1.2 Conduct a meeting with AVANCE staff and if applicable an evaluation work group to discuss scope of work, expectations of tasks, requirements for timely delivery, and identification and resolution of mitigating factors.</p> <p>1.2.1 Prepare an agenda of a meeting with AVANCE staff and if applicable evaluation work group to discuss scope of work, expectation of tasks, requirements for timely delivery of tasks, and identification and resolution of mitigating factors.</p> <p>1.2.2 Review, refine and develop a program logic model for the evaluation of the AVANCE PCEP.</p>	
Task 2	<p>Conduct data collection activities</p> <p>2.1 Review and identify data sources</p> <p>2.2 Identify methods to collect evaluation data</p> <p>2.3 Develop evaluation instruments and protocols</p> <p>2.4 Pilot test evaluation instruments</p> <p>2.5 Review archival data</p> <p>2.6 Conduct telephone interviews (n = 350 families)</p> <p>2.7 Conduct case studies (n = 24 – 30 families)</p>	<p>Archival data review</p> <p>Evaluation instruments and protocols</p>
Task 3	<p>Conduct data analysis</p> <p>3.1 Conduct analysis of archival data</p> <p>3.2 Conduct analysis of telephone interviews</p> <p>3.3 Conduct analysis of case studies</p>	<p>Analysis summaries</p>
Task 4	<p>Develop report of evaluation findings</p> <p>4.1 Develop draft report</p> <p>4.2 Submit draft for AVANCE review</p> <p>4.3 Develop final report</p> <p>4.4 Present report findings</p>	<p>Draft evaluation report</p> <p>Final evaluation report</p>



SAN ANTONIO CHAPTER – HAPPY AND SAD FACE PILLOWS MADE BY AVANCE PARENTS AND AVANCE POSTER

PCEP Description

This description of the PCEP is based on an archival review of documents provided by AVANCE, including prior evaluations. The AVANCE PCEP has two phases. The first phase consists of weekly parenting education classes that continue for nine months. Additional services include home visits, early childhood development, transportation, nutritious meals and snacks, information and referral, and advocacy. Graduates from the PCEP are then encouraged to continue to the second phase during which classes in ESL and preparation for the GED are offered. The ancillary services of early childhood development classrooms, transportation, information and referral, and advocacy continue to be available during the second phase.

The goal of the first year is to enhance the child-rearing skills of parents of infants so that they are better able to foster the optimal development of their children. The goal of the second year is to provide program graduates with educational opportunities that, once achieved, will put them in a position to seek employment in better paying jobs, thereby improving their family's standard of living. During both phases, the program works to foster the participants' belief in a better future, as well as their ability to achieve parenting and personal goals and to seek out and benefit from social support.

Parent education classes are one day a week at each site with each class lasting three hours. Each class is divided into three one-hour sessions. The first session is devoted to toy making. AVANCE developed a *Toy Making Manual*, describing the materials needed, assembly procedures and educational activities for 32 toys designed to reinforce the concept of learning through play. Participants are provided the materials and assisted in making an educational toy for their children. All of the toys are assembled using common household materials. Staff discuss educational activities parents and children can do together using the toys at home. They also provide parents with a "possibility sheet" that describes additional activities the parent can use to engage their children in at home. The benefits of social interaction are stressed through discussions of how parents might use toys and other items in play with their children.

The toy making session also fosters interaction among participants on a more personal level. While they learn new skills as cut, paste, draw, sew and otherwise make the toys, they are also making new friends and sharing common experiences. Past participants speak of how they met their *comadres* during the classes, indicating the depth of the relationships that often develop.

The second session involves a lesson on child growth and development and on parenting skills. The presentation of information is conducted in a lecture format utilizing PowerPoint slides with interactive, group discussion. The parent educator presents parenting lessons with prepared teaching materials from a curriculum based on Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner's human development theory. The presenter periodically asks the parents questions and encourages them to share personal experiences. A more extended opportunity for informal discussions of the topics is provided during the next session.

The AVANCE PCEP curriculum has been developed specifically for use with the population served by the agency. It is divided into a series of 11 units, each consisting of between two and four individual lessons. The topics include: providing a foundation for learning; the physical, social and emotional needs of the child; nutrition for the young child; childhood illnesses; children's behavior; cognitive and language development; prenatal and infant needs; and self-awareness and goal setting for the parent. Each lesson includes a series of displays and supplemental handouts that reinforce the information discussed in class.

During the final session of each class, guest speakers provide information on special topics, such as health, nutrition and community resources. Later, these same resources often are accessed by the participants either on their own or with the assistance of AVANCE staff. Staff assistance may be as brief as providing a referral or may involve accompanying the parent to an agency and actively advocating for the desired services.

One of the most critical elements of the AVANCE experience is the relationship that develops between the participants and the staff. A guiding principle of the program is that parents should be treated with respect and dignity. All of the program staff help create a supportive environment by striving to make the participants feel important and welcome. The design of the program gives the parents the opportunity to get to know a variety of staff involved in early childhood education, the parenting and toy-making classes, home visits, and transportation of families to and from home. Often, it is the development of a special bond with a staff member that provides the parent with the support and encouragement needed to continue with and prosper from the program. In fact, some participants eventually become AVANCE staff, as they strive to share what they gained from the program with other mothers, and AVANCE favors this as noted below.

The staff at AVANCE is comprised primarily of bilingual Hispanic women. AVANCE's employment philosophy is directed toward hiring individuals with a background and experiences that are similar to those of the service population. In this way, AVANCE can serve all community members, be they English or Spanish speakers.

In order to secure staff members who can understand and empathize with the agency's participants and to provide continuing opportunities for program graduates, AVANCE gives program graduates priority when staff vacancies occur. This practice provides the agency with employees who have an intimate acquaintance with the program, having experienced it from the participant's point of view.



HOUSTON CHAPTER – TOYS AND CRAFTS CREATED BY AVANCE PARENTS

Evaluation Design and Methodology

The general purpose of the evaluation was to investigate the long-term effects of the PCEP on participant parents and their children. To accomplish this task, the evaluation used quantitative and qualitative techniques. To conduct an evaluation that is thorough, feasible and appropriate to the goals, objectives and desired outcomes, the evaluation team kept in constant contact with AVANCE staff to:

- ◆ Identify any additional evaluation questions or concerns and review the data gathering tasks and persons responsible for obtaining information from the agency databases, files and other records;
- ◆ Agree to a timeline, deliverables and communication protocol for completion of the external evaluation report; and
- ◆ Identify and collect AVANCE data and information needed for this study.

Data Collection Methods

The evaluation design included qualitative and quantitative techniques in assessing the broad psycho-social and economic context of PCEP participants and the program impact. It included archival reviews of program documents and participant databases. However, the main two techniques used to collect the required data were: (a) an extensive survey conducted by telephone, and (b) follow up face-to-face interviews of selected participants who, during the telephone interview, agreed to a more in-depth review of their impressions about the program. Both instruments are included in the Appendix.

Telephone Surveys

Four random samples of 1,000 participants were drawn from the participant database created from in-take files provided by AVANCE. Excel was used to facilitate the interviews. The spreadsheet had 110 fields, 20 of which were pre-populated with information on potential participants. The remaining fields constituted the questions and sub-questions that made up the telephone interview protocol. The goal was to conduct short telephone interviews of between 15 and 30 minutes. Therefore, most of the questions were single category (yes/no) or multiple-choice single response types. For each of these questions, the spreadsheet presented a drop-down menu with the possible responses. At the end, there were some open-ended questions to offer

participants an opportunity to share what they and their families most gained from AVANCE and feedback for improvements.

Callers were trained to carry out the telephone interviews. The training involved an overview of AVANCE, the role IDRA played in the study, and how to engage participants and conduct the interviews using the Excel-aided instrument. After callers attempted to reach each graduate in a sample several times, the next sample was used, as the evaluation team worked to reach the 350 planned telephone interviews. Exhibit 2 shows the interview success rate, the number of families that were called, the actual calls made and the number of interviews completed in the five cities where the evaluation was conducted. The success rate is the percentage of callable families that were actually interviewed (*interviews completed / callable families x 100*).

Exhibit 2: Telephone Interviews Success Rate				
City	Callable Families	Calls Made	Interviews Completed	Success Rate
San Antonio	1,480	2,708	95	6.4%
Dallas	1,204	2,082	48	4.0%
Houston	460	1,138	25	5.4%
Austin	450	926	22	4.9%
El Paso	291	687	9	3.1%
Total	3,885	7,541	199	5.1%

The *callable families* were the number of families who could be called, once records without telephone numbers and without adults were removed from the list. This reduced the total four samples from 4,000 to 3,885. Each family had up to three telephone numbers listed and each telephone might have been called several times in an attempt to reach the family. This resulted in more than 7,500 calls. After all reasonable efforts were made, 199 telephone interviews were completed. The analysis shows an overall success rate of 5.1 percent (Exhibit 2). The reasons for failure to reach families are listed in Exhibit 3.

Exhibit 3: Summary of Unsuccessful Calls		
Reason for failed calls	Total	Percent
Answering machine – left message, never responded	429	11.6%
Answering machine – no additional message left	10	0.3%

Exhibit 3: Summary of Unsuccessful Calls		
Reason for failed calls	Total	Percent
Answering service – unable to leave message	205	5.6%
Call back	169	4.6%
Hang-up	54	1.5%
No answer / busy	486	13.2%
Non-working number – disconnected	1,209	32.8%
Non-working number – fax number	38	1.0%
Non-working number – incorrect area code	307	8.3%
Non-working number – no longer in service	136	3.7%
Non-working number – temporarily out of service	28	0.8%
Other	44	1.2%
Refusal	90	2.4%
Voice mailbox full / not setup	32	0.9%
Wrong number	449	12.2%
Total Families Unable to Reach	3,686	100.0%

As Exhibit 3 shows, about one third (32.8 percent) of the failed calls was due to disconnected telephones. Other important reasons involved no answering or busy signals (13.2 percent), wrong numbers (12.2 percent), and leaving messages in answering machines repeatedly, but not getting a response (11.6 percent).

Face-to-Face Interviews

The face-to-face interview was designed as a complement to the telephone interview (see Appendix). The goal was to obtain the basic facts in the telephone interviews and then have the participants explain in more details the stories and events that connected those facts. To facilitate this process, the interview guide was customized for each participant. This customization was based on the answers the participants provided in the telephone interviews. For example, if a participant indicated in the telephone interview that she owned a business, a question in the face-to-face interview would prompt her to talk more about it. This also made the conversation more relevant for each participant.

Participation in the face-to-face interviews was self-selected. At the end of the telephone interviews, participants were asked whether they were willing to participate in a more in-depth, face-to-face interview. More than 100 mothers agreed to the face-to-face interviews (Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4: Face-to-Face Interviews Completed			
City	Telephone Interviews	Agreed to Face-to-Face	Face-to-Face Interviews
San Antonio	95	42	9
Dallas	48	22	6
Houston	25	18	3
Austin	22	14	4
El Paso	9	6	2
Total	199	102	24

The initial goal was to conduct 24 to 30 face-to-face interviews. It is important to note that most interviews were conducted at the local AVANCE chapter in each city in coordination with chapter staff. However, in San Antonio, some interviews were conducted at IDRA and a few at the participant’s home at their request because they lacked transportation or had some other mobility issues. This additional effort enabled the evaluation team to reach the goal and 24 face-to-face interviews were completed. These interviews were recorded and, with the participants’ permission, photographs were taken of them and some of the objects they made as part of their participation in AVANCE. Some of these pictures are reproduced throughout this document and the accompanying summary. The interviews provided a rich qualitative source of information for the evaluation.

Exhibit 5 summarizes the major data collection methods used in this evaluation. They included the archival review of documents, the telephone interviews and the face-to-face, in-depth interviews.

Exhibit 5: Data Collection Methods	
Data Collection Methods	Sampling Plan
Archival review of program-related documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All relevant program and evaluation reports, other relevant program documents, including web-site materials, prior evaluation and research studies. • All relevant participant data items, including but not limited to demographics, educational level, language preference, telephone information, etc.
Telephone Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the information provided, AVANCE graduates were contacted by telephone to conduct a short (15 to 30 minutes) interview.

Exhibit 5: Data Collection Methods

Data Collection Methods	Sampling Plan
Formal face-to-face interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal interviews with participants to obtain a more in-depth view of the effects AVANCE had on them, their children and their families.

Evaluation Logistics

Exhibit 6 summarizes the major tasks undertaken, the staff responsible and the timelines followed to complete the evaluation.

Exhibit 6: Evaluation Logistics

Task	Responsible	Schedule
1.0 Coordination meeting 1.1 Convene the meetings 1.2 Review purpose of the evaluation 1.3 Develop guiding principles for the conduct of the evaluation 1.4 Establish and clarify roles and responsibilities 1.5 Establish communications plan	IDRA Evaluation Team AVANCE Program staff	Throughout the project
2.0 Instrument development 2.1 Update evaluation design including questions, data collection and analysis procedures 2.2 Identify relevant data sources 2.3 Identify relevant variables and measures 2.4 Develop comprehensive survey 2.5 Obtain consensus on survey questions	IDRA Evaluation Team	All tasks between February 2013 – April 2013
3.0 Archival reviews. 3.1 Identify relevant data sources 3.2 Identify relevant variables and measures 3.3 Create database combining individual files 3.4 Conduct preliminary data analysis	IDRA Evaluation Team	All tasks between November 2012 – May 2013
4.0 Telephone Interviews 4.1 Develop interview instrument 4.2 Train observers 4.3 Conduct interviews 4.4 Organize collected data 4.5 Conduct preliminary data analysis	IDRA Evaluation Team	All tasks between May 2013 – June 2013

Exhibit 6: Evaluation Logistics

Task	Responsible	Schedule
5.0 Face-to-Face Interviews 5.1 Develop face-to-face instrument 5.2 Develop participant profile design 5.3 Train interviewers 5.4 Conduct interviews 5.5 Transcribe interview tapes 5.6 Summarize transcriptions by focus areas 5.7 Create case studies	IDRA Evaluation Team	All tasks between June 2013 – August 2013
6.0 Data processing. 6.1 Organize data for analysis 6.2 Perform data reduction 6.3 Conduct data conversion and validation 6.4 Store and maintain data	IDRA Evaluation Team	All tasks between July 2013 – August 2013
7.0 Comprehensive analysis and interpretation of Data 7.1 Review all data elements 7.2. Conduct comprehensive analysis 7.3 Interpret and generate preliminary findings	IDRA Evaluation Team	All tasks in August 2013
8.0 Development of evaluation report 8.1 Develop draft report 8.2 Write and submit final report	IDRA Evaluation Team	August 2013 – September 2013

Data Analysis and Reporting

Appropriate analyses were conducted, including descriptive statistics (frequency distributions and means primarily) on the quantitative data and content analyses on the qualitative information. After analyzing the data, the results were summarized in the rest of this evaluation report. Findings and recommendations are provided later in this report.



HOUSTON CHAPTER – CONCEPT BALL, RAG DOLL, AND HAPPY AND SAD FACE PILLOWS – CREATED BY AVANCE PARENTS

Limitations of the Evaluation

All studies have limitations. This is not an exception. The following items summarize some of the limitations of this evaluation.

- The evaluation subjects graduated from the AVANCE PCEP between the years 1999 and 2006. The evaluation goal was to find the program's long-term effects on those graduates retrospectively. As a result, no reasonable control group could be selected. The lack of control group posed a threat to the internal validity of the findings. However, this was mitigated by randomly selecting the sample. We also showed that the sample is a good representation of the population. Therefore, we are confident that we can attribute a substantial amount of the effects to the intervention.
- The telephone interview was the primary source of data that could be analyzed statistically. Since most people are generally unwilling to participate in long research-induced telephone interviews, we needed to carefully select the items that would respond to the evaluation questions and sub-questions so as to optimize the time participants were willing to give us. These items were selected in conjunction with AVANCE through the planned meetings to focus the evaluation. As a result, there are many other questions that will have to be investigated through other studies in the future, such as the effects of the intervention on the participant's family beyond the participating child, and on the community. However, based on the face-to-face interviews, we have indications that they did have important effects on both groups.
- The main source of data used for the evaluation analyses was the participants' opinions and recollections. While there is no reason to believe that there was a bias on this source, it is important to disclose that no effort was made to verify its validity independently. However, given that the sample size was large (199 participants), it is reasonable to assume that: (a) each participant's items set is independent from the others, which decreases any potential bias; and (b) given the participants' geographic and age (space and time) diversity, it is reasonable to assume that the sample would have enough internal heterogeneity that trends resulting from their analyses could be attributed to something other than pure bias or random effects; reasonably, they could be attributed to the intervention.

Evaluation Findings

As part of the archival review, several descriptive statistics analyses involving AVANCE graduate demographics were conducted. They are presented in Part 1 of the evaluation report. Part 2 presents the analyses of the telephone interviews and the face-to-face interviews.

AVANCE Graduate Demographics – The Population

A database was created combining several files provided by AVANCE with the graduates' information from the five cities participating in the evaluation. Several descriptive statistics analyses involving AVANCE graduate demographics were conducted in preparation for the telephone interviews. Exhibit 7 shows that the average age of the typical graduate was 38 years old, at the time of the research. This was consistent throughout the various cities, except San Antonio, where graduates were just below 35.

Exhibit 7: Graduate Average Age			
City	Total	Mean Age	Standard Deviation
San Antonio	1,506	34.6	6.4
Dallas	1,232	38.4	5.9
Houston	464	39.0	5.7
Austin	460	38.9	6.6
El Paso	307	39.1	6.5
Total	3,969	38.0	6.2

The majority of the AVANCE participants were Hispanic, from 95.9 percent in San Antonio to 99.8 percent in Austin, and 98.0 percent for all graduates. There were 35 White graduates (or 0.9 percent) and 24 African American graduates (or 0.6 percent) out of the 3,931 participants who responded to this question in their initial applications. Five graduates were Native Americans and four were Asian Americans. Exhibit 8 shows detailed statistics for the graduates' race/ethnicity.

Exhibit 8: Graduate Race/Ethnicity

City	Total	N	Asian	African American	White	Native American	Hispanic	Hispanic Percent
San Antonio	1,506	1,477	2	23	25	3	1,417	95.9%
Dallas	1,232	1,230	0	0	3	0	1,226	99.7%
Houston	464	460	0	0	0	1	459	99.8%
Austin	460	459	2	1	5	1	449	97.8%
El Paso	307	305	0	0	2	0	303	99.3%
Total	3,969	3,931	4	24	35	5	3,854	98.0%
Percent		100%	0.1%	0.6%	0.9%	0.1%	98.0%	

Although there were 30 families (1.3 percent) who earned more than \$150,000 a year, more than one third (37.1 percent) of the AVANCE graduates earned less than \$20,000 a year; more than half (56.0 percent) earned less than \$30,000 a year; and about seven out of 10 (72.4 percent) earned less than \$40,000. Exhibit 9 shows a wide range of income levels (from under \$20,000 to over \$150,000); however, the AVANCE graduates were typically at the lowest levels of that range.

Exhibit 9: AVANCE Graduate Annual Income Levels Upon Enrolling in AVANCE

City	Total	N	Under \$20,000	\$20,000-\$29,999	\$30,000-\$39,999	\$40,000-\$49,999	\$50,000-\$59,999	\$60,000-\$74,999	\$75,000-\$149,999	\$150,000 +
San Antonio	1,506	842	389	174	127	72	37	22	15	6
Dallas	1,232	744	225	137	129	96	59	40	45	13
Houston	464	276	83	40	50	34	20	20	24	5
Austin	460	174	28	34	30	22	17	26	13	4
El Paso	307	204	107	38	30	11	5	6	5	2
Total	3,969	2,240	832	423	366	235	138	114	102	30
Percent		100%	37.1%	18.9%	16.3%	10.5%	6.2%	5.1%	4.6%	1.3%
Cumulative Percentage			37.1%	56.0%	72.4%	82.9%	89.0%	94.1%	98.7%	100%

About 60.8 percent of AVANCE graduates did not have a response for their educational attainment, suggesting that most did not complete high school (Exhibit 10). For the remaining 39.2 percent, 21.0 percent completed high school, 16.7 percent completed college, 1.4 percent completed graduate school, and 0.1 percent attended a vocational or technical school. Therefore, most graduates had low formal educational attainment.

Exhibit 10: Graduate Education Attainment						
City	Total	Did Not Answer	Completed High School	Completed College	Completed Graduate School	Attended Vocational/ Technical
San Antonio	1,506	791	429	259	24	3
Dallas	1,232	808	213	197	14	0
Houston	464	291	80	86	7	0
Austin	460	346	48	61	5	0
El Paso	307	178	64	59	6	0
Total	3,969	2,414	834	662	56	3
Percent	100%	60.8%	21.0%	16.7%	1.4%	0.1%

The demographic data presented in this section portray a picture of mostly Hispanic families living a very modest life, with low formal education, and working low-paying jobs to sustain their children.

Telephone Interview Participant Demographics – The Sample

Various demographic analyses were completed to understand the characteristics of the 199 telephone interview participants, a subset of the database of graduates described earlier. These 199 mothers constitute the sample used to carry out the evaluation. The nearly 4,000 records analyzed in the previous section represent the population. A second purpose of this section is to show that this sample is a good representation of the population. Therefore, comparisons between this sample and its population are made throughout the section. This is required to be able to make inferences from the findings based on the sample to the whole population.

Exhibit 11 shows that the average age of the telephone interview participant was about 38 years old, identical to that of the general graduate group. The age distribution by city also was consistent with the general graduate age distribution described in the previous section. With an average age of 36, San Antonio participants were somewhat younger than participants from the other cities. Participants' age ranged from 22 to 55. In San Antonio, about 15.3 percent (13 out of 85) of participants were 30 years old or younger; very few participants in the other cities were younger than 30. The exhibit below shows details about the telephone participants' age distribution, based on their birth dates, when available.

Exhibit 11: Participant Average Age

Age Range	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
22 to 30	13	27.1	2	28.0	0		1	29.0	0		16	27.3
31 to 55	72	37.6	46	41.2	25	38.9	21	41.0	9	44.0	173	39.5
Overall	85	36.0	48	40.6	25	38.9	22	40.5	9	44.0	189	38.4

The database contained information about the first and the second child who participated in the program with their mothers, about 10 years ago. For those who participated in the evaluation, at the time of the telephone interviews, the first child group has grown to between 7 and 20 years of age. Their average age was just under 12. In Austin and El Paso, they were somewhat older, 12.8 and 13.4, respectively (Exhibit 12).

Exhibit 12: First Child's Age

Age Range	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
7 to 10	30	8.9	17	8.9	12	9.5	7	9.1	2	9.0	68	9.0
11 to 16	43	13.0	19	13.0	9	12.5	10	13.5	2	12.5	83	13.0
16 to 20	2	17.5	3	17.3	2	16.5	3	18.7	3	17.0	13	17.5
Overall	75	11.6	39	11.5	23	11.0	20	12.8	7	13.4	164	11.7

For these participants, the second child group has grown to an average age of 13.4 years old, with San Antonio displaying a somewhat older age of 14.3 on average. For the whole group, their age ranged from 8 to 29 years, as illustrated in Exhibit 13.

Exhibit 13: Second Child's Age

Age Range	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
8 to 10	4	9.0	3	9.7	0		1	10.0	0		8	9.4
11 to 15	11	13.0	7	13.7	6	12.3	4	12.5	1	11.0	29	13.0
16 to 20	2	17.5	3	16.5	1	16.0	0		1	16.0	7	17.0
21 to 29	2	29.0	0		0		0		0		2	29.0
Overall	19	14.3	13	13.2	7	12.6	5	12.2	2	13.5	46	13.4

The ethnic distribution of the telephone interview participants is shown in Exhibit 14. This distribution mirrors the general graduate ethnic distribution (presented earlier), with an overall 98 percent of Hispanic participants. As with the general graduate group, San Antonio participants exhibited a somewhat lower proportion of Hispanics with 95.8 percent. Two African American and two White or Caucasian mothers participated in the telephone interview in San Antonio. In the other cities, all participants were Hispanic.

Exhibit 14: Participant Race/Ethnicity							
City	N	Asian	African American	White	Native American	Hispanic	Hispanic Percent
San Antonio	96	0	2	2	0	92	95.8%
Dallas	47	0	0	0	0	47	100.0%
Houston	25	0	0	0	0	25	100.0%
Austin	22	0	0	0	0	22	100.0%
El Paso	9	0	0	0	0	9	100.0%
Total	199	0	2	2	0	195	98.0%
Percent	100%	0.0%	1.0%	1.0%	0.0%	98.0%	

The participant income distribution at the time of their enrollment in AVANCE mirrors that of the general graduate group described earlier. As in the general group, a few families (1.4 percent) earned \$150,000 or above; however, more than a third (37.9 percent) earned less than \$20,000 a year; more than half (56.4 percent) earned less than \$30,000; and nearly 80 percent (77.1 percent) earned less than \$40,000. All sectors of the income range (from under \$20,000 to over \$150,000) were presented in the sample constituted by the telephone interview participants. And their proportions were virtually identical to those in the general graduate database. Exhibit 15 shows the telephone interview annual income levels distribution for those participants whose information was available in the original database.

Exhibit 15: Participant Annual Income Levels Upon Enrolling in AVANCE

City	N	Under \$20,000	\$20,000-\$29,999	\$30,000-\$39,999	\$40,000-\$49,999	\$50,000-\$59,999	\$60,000-\$74,999	\$75,000-\$149,999	\$150,000 +
San Antonio	65	35	15	10	3	1	1	0	0
San Antonio	65	35	15	10	3	1	1	0	0
Dallas	34	8	4	10	8	1	2	1	0
Houston	20	6	1	5	3	1	1	2	1
Austin	13	2	2	3	1	0	2	2	1
El Paso	8	2	4	1	0	1	0	0	0
Total	140	53	26	29	15	4	6	5	2
Percent	100%	37.9%	18.6%	20.7%	10.7%	2.9%	4.3%	3.6%	1.4%
Cumulative Percentage		37.9%	56.4%	77.1%	87.9%	90.7%	95.0%	98.6%	100.0%

Exhibit 16 shows the participants' education attainment. The proportion of participants who did not complete high school, 47.7 percent, was lower than the general graduate group (60.8 percent). About a quarter (25.1 percent) of the participants (similar to the 21.0 percent in the graduate group) completed high school. Another quarter (26.1 percent) completed college, which is more than the 16.7 percent for the general group. And 1.0 percent had graduate degrees, similar to the 1.4 percent in the general graduate group. Therefore, although the telephone interview participants had somewhat more formal education than the general group, most (72.8 percent below college level) had still low formal educational attainment when they participated in the AVANCE program.

Exhibit 16: Telephone Interview Participant Education Attainment Upon Enrolling in AVANCE

City	Total	Did Not Answer	Completed High School	Completed College	Completed Graduate School	Attended Vocational/ Technical
San Antonio	95	36	28	30	1	0
Dallas	48	30	9	9	0	0
Houston	25	13	7	5	0	0
Austin	22	14	3	4	1	0
El Paso	9	2	3	4	0	0
Total	199	95	50	52	2	0
Percent	100%	47.7%	25.1%	26.1%	1.0%	0.0%

Although most participants (55.3 percent) tended to use cellular telephones for the interviews, there were marked differences by city. In San Antonio, the large majority (71.6 percent) used cellular telephones, while in El Paso and in Houston, 11.1 percent and 32.0 percent, respectively, used cellular telephone. In Austin and Dallas, there was a more even distribution of cellular telephones and home telephone usage (Exhibit 17).

Exhibit 17: Participant Type of Telephone Used for Interview												
Telephone Type	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 95)		(N = 48)		(N = 25)		(N = 22)		(N = 9)		(N = 199)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Cellular telephone	68	71.6	22	45.8	8	32.0	11	50.0	1	11.1	110	55.3
Home telephone	27	28.4	26	54.2	17	68.0	11	50.0	8	88.9	89	44.7

Overall, two-third of participants (66.8 percent) preferred to be interviewed in Spanish. In Houston and El Paso, all participants were interviewed in Spanish at their request. In San Antonio, however, the trend reverted and most participants (62.1 percent) preferred to be interviewed in English (Exhibit 18).

Exhibit 18: Preferred Language for Interview												
Language	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 95)		(N = 48)		(N = 25)		(N = 22)		(N = 9)		(N = 199)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
English	59	62.1	4	8.3	0	0.0	3	13.6	0	0.0	66	33.2
Spanish	36	37.9	44	91.7	25	100.0	19	86.4	9	100.0	133	66.8

On average, participants attended AVANCE 10.4 years ago. There was a 22-year span between the earliest attendees (1989) and the latest attendees (2011). However, the large majority (70.3 percent) attended between 2000 and 2005 (eight to 13 years ago), with 2003 (10 years ago) as the mean and also the median year. Some participants did not remember the year they participated, which explains the 24 (199 to 175) missing values. Exhibit 19 shows the frequency distribution by year and city.

Exhibit 19: Year When Participants Attended AVANCE

Year Range	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 92)		(N = 45)		(N = 16)		(N = 15)		(N = 7)		(N = 175)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1989 to 1998	9	9.8	2	4.4	0	0.0	1	6.7	1	14.3	13	7.4
1999	4	4.3	2	4.4	2	12.5	4	26.7	0	0.0	12	6.9
2000	16	17.4	1	2.2	1	6.3	3	20.0	1	14.3	22	12.6
2001	9	9.8	5	11.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	14	8.0
2002	5	5.4	6	13.3	1	6.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	12	6.9
2003	11	12.0	7	15.6	6	37.5	1	6.7	0	0.0	25	14.3
2004	12	13.0	10	22.2	2	12.5	2	13.3	2	28.6	28	16.0
2005	17	18.5	4	8.9	1	6.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	22	12.6
2006	3	3.3	5	11.1	0	0.0	4	26.7	3	42.9	15	8.6
2007 to 2011	6	6.5	3	6.7	3	18.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	12	6.9

Nearly 91 percent (90.8 percent) of participants indicated that they completed the nine-month PCEP. Of those who left the program early, the primary reasons included mothers who had to leave due to emergencies or unforeseen events. In some cities (Austin and El Paso), 100.0 percent of the participants completed the program (Exhibit 20).

Exhibit 20: Did you complete the nine-month PCEP at AVANCE?

Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 92)		(N = 48)		(N = 25)		(N = 21)		(N = 8)		(N = 194)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Yes	79	85.9	45	93.8	23	92.0	21	100.0	9	100.0	177	90.8
No	13	14.1	3	6.3	2	8.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	18	9.2

Likewise, nearly 90 percent (89.6 percent) of the participants' child or children completed the program, along with their mothers. Again, some unforeseen circumstances prevented some of the children from completing the program. Exhibit 21 shows the distribution by city.

Exhibit 21: Did your child or children complete the nine-month PCEP?

Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 91)		(N = 47)		(N = 25)		(N = 21)		(N = 9)		(N = 193)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Yes	77	84.6	43	91.5	23	92.0	21	100.0	9	100.0	173	89.6
No	14	15.4	4	8.5	2	8.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	20	10.4

The actual number of children completing the program with their mothers is presented in Exhibit 22. About 60 percent (59.6 percent) indicated that one child completed the program with them; 27.5 percent indicated that two children completed the program. Twelve mothers did not have children completing the program with them; some of them were pregnant and wanted to get a head-start on childhood development and parenting skills. A few mothers had more than two children completing the program: Eight had three and five had four children complete the program.

Exhibit 22: How many children completed the program?

Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 92)		(N = 46)		(N = 25)		(N = 21)		(N = 9)		(N = 193)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
0	8	8.7	3	6.5	1	4.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	12	6.2
1	55	59.8	26	56.5	14	56.0	13	61.9	7	77.8	115	59.6
2	22	23.9	16	34.8	8	32.0	6	28.6	1	11.1	53	27.5
3	2	2.2	1	2.2	2	8.0	2	9.5	1	11.1	8	4.1
4	5	5.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	2.6

On average, participants were involved in the program for nearly 10 months (9.9 months). Most of them (72.7) stayed for the duration of the PCEP (exactly nine months). After completing the program, many mothers (17.5 percent) continued attending the additional classes and activities offered by AVANCE, staying involved between 10 and 36 months. Fewer than 10 percent (9.8 percent) left the program before the nine-month. Exhibit 23 provides the details.

Exhibit 23: How many months were you involved or enrolled with AVANCE?												
Answer (Months)	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 91)		(N = 48)		(N = 25)		(N = 21)		(N = 9)		(N = 194)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
2 to 8	11	12.1	5	10.4	2	8.0	1	4.8	0	0.0	19	9.8
9	68	74.7	26	54.2	21	84.0	17	81.0	9	100.0	141	72.7
10 to 36	12	13.2	17	35.4	2	8.0	3	14.3	0	0.0	34	17.5

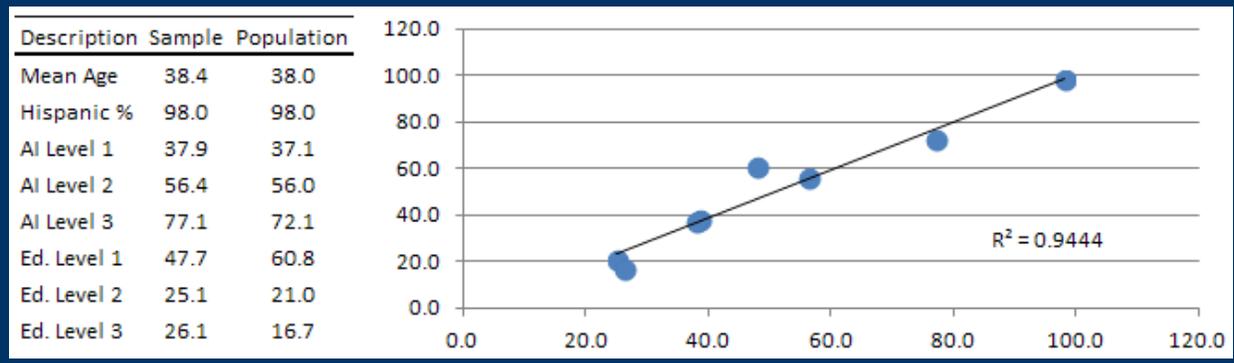
To complete this section, the telephone interview participants (the *sample*) were compared with the general graduate database group (the *population*) in several key statistics, as shown in Exhibit 24. The comparison shows that there was great similarity between the two groups, particularly in terms of age, ethnicity and income level. The sample seemed to have achieved a slightly higher educational level in the average than the population, but the general distribution was still very similar in both groups, with the majority of participants attaining less than high school completion. Therefore, it was concluded that this sample, which was used in the rest of the report, was a good representation of the population.

Exhibit 24: Sample vs. Population: Comparison by Key Statistics									
	N	Age	Hispanic	Annual Income			Educational Level		
		Mean	Percent	<\$20,000	<\$30,000	<\$40,000	< HS	HS	College
Sample	199	38.4	98.0	37.9	56.4	77.1	47.7	25.1	26.1
Population	3,969	38.0	98.0	37.1	56.0	72.1	60.8	21.0	16.7
Differences		0.4	0.0	0.8	0.4	5.0	-13.1	4.1	9.4

The analyses performed and presented in the preceding paragraphs and exhibits show a sample of mothers who were deeply involved in the program approximately 10 years ago. The analyses also demonstrate that the sample is a good representation of the larger graduate population, which was described in the previous section.

In order to gain a sense of the predictive power of a sample with the statistics listed above, for a population with the corresponding parameters also listed in Exhibit 24, a regression analysis was performed on the paired values of these two series. Exhibit 25 shows the resulting graphic and corresponding coefficient of determination (R^2).

Exhibit 25: Sample Predictive Power



The analysis shows a predictive power of 94.4 percent ($R^2 = 0.9444$). That is, any given sample statistic can theoretically predict its corresponding population parameter with 94.4 percent accuracy. This high predictive power is due to the proximity between the sample statistics and their corresponding population parameters. When these values are paired in a Cartesian diagram, as shown in Exhibit 25, they depict an almost perfect correspondence between both sets, underscoring the similarity between sample and population characteristics. In the following section, an analysis of the effects the program had on the participants is presented. Discussion is provided in five focus areas to provide a degree of depth and facilitate understanding.

Impact Analysis by Focus Areas

To assess the long-term effects of the program on participants, the evaluation findings were organized in five major focus areas. This facilitated summarizing and organizing different types of data in a rational way. Therefore, the evaluation findings in this section are reported following these five focus areas.

Focus Area 1	Knowledge of Child Development and Parenting Skills
Focus Area 2	Support for Two-Generation Education and Growth
Focus Area 3	Employment and Income Levels
Focus Area 4	Homeownership and Entrepreneurship
Focus Area 5	Barriers, Lasting Effects and Suggestions for Improvement

For each focus area, data were analyzed from three sources: (a) a short telephone interview with 199 participants; (b) an in-depth, face-to-face, individual interview with 24 participants; and (c) the data stored in the database described earlier with participants' basic information collected when they entered the program about 10 years ago. These analyses present in a systematic way the impact participating in AVANCE had on the mothers and their children. In addition to the summaries, analyses, and findings for each focus area, a synthesis of the opinions about the particular focus area expressed by the participants is included at the end of the focus area section, in as close as possible to their original format to convey, in their words, their most relevant preoccupations and encouragements about the PCEP in regard to the focus area.



AUSTIN CHAPTER – CONCEPT BALL MADE BY AVANCE PARENTS

Focus Area 1: Knowledge of Child Development and Parenting Skills

Findings:

1. Most mothers (98.5 percent) participated in parenting lessons and activities designed to increase their knowledge and preparation to understand and apply early childhood development concepts and practices.
2. Most mothers and their children (90.3 percent) participated in AVANCE early childhood development activities where mothers could practice their new understanding and skills.
3. With 637 children, these 199 mothers had substantial opportunities to apply child development and parenting knowledge and skills in an average of between three and four children, most of whom were in their adolescent years at the time of the interviews.
4. The 199 AVANCE mothers had 454 children at the various levels of the K-16 educational continuum, representing 89.5 percent of children who would be predicted based on their age to be attending K-12 and 87.6 percent who would be predicted to be attending K-16.
5. With a K-12 attrition rate of 10.5 percent, the AVANCE families' students had a lower attrition rate than statewide rate for Hispanic students in Texas, which had an attrition rate of 33 percent, according to the 2012-13 IDRA Texas public school attrition study (Johnson, 2013). Moreover, the AVANCE family attrition rate (10.5 percent) was lower than the Texas attrition rate for all students (25 percent).
6. More than 93 percent of the mothers indicated that their children were school-ready when entering school. Of those, almost 91 percent credited AVANCE with helping them get their children ready for school.
7. Regarding the children's performance in school, 87.8 percent of the mothers reported that their children were doing above average (good) or excellent (top of the class).
8. Mothers (79.4 percent) reported that their children received awards from the school, such as Honor Roll, Perfect Attendance, and Citizenship Award.
9. Mothers (75.8 percent) reported that their children were actively involved in extra-curricular activities at their schools, including athletics, gymnastics and indoor sports; school band, choir and orchestra; baseball, basketball, football, soccer and volleyball teams; music appreciation and lessons; and academic and science clubs.

Knowledge of child development and parenting skills is the first and the most important focus area since it is the most essential PCEP component and it is infused into most of the others. Therefore, a significant number of items in both the telephone interview and the face-to-face interview instruments were devoted to this topic. We first looked at the level of participation in the PCEP constituents most directly related to this focus area and then analyzed the effects of such participation on the mothers and their children, as they grow up and went to schools. The analysis includes children readiness, school attendance, school success, and the children’s engagement in both academic and extra-academic activities.

Participation in AVANCE Classes and Activities

As Exhibit 26 shows, most mothers (98.5 percent) indicated that they participated in parenting lessons. In Dallas, Austin and El Paso, all mothers indicated that they participated in these lessons.

Exhibit 26: Did you have parenting lessons?												
Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 92)		(N = 48)		(N = 25)		(N = 21)		(N = 9)		(N = 195)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Yes	90	97.8	48	100.0	24	96.0	21	100.0	9	100.0	192	98.5
No	2	2.2	0	0.0	1	4.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	1.5

When asked about their participation in early childhood development activities, 90.3 percent of the mothers indicated that they participated in these activities, as shown in Exhibit 27, depicting this analysis by level of participation and city.

Exhibit 27: Did you and your child (ren) participate in early childhood development activities?												
Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 95)		(N = 47)		(N = 24)		(N = 21)		(N = 9)		(N = 196)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Yes	82	86.3	41	87.2	24	100.0	21	100.0	9	100.0	177	90.3
No	13	13.7	6	12.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	19	9.7

Supporting Children School Attendance

Parenting skills and knowledge of child development was extremely relevant to those mothers because they had between one and 10 children, with three as the median, at the time of the interviews. About one third of the mothers had three children, and a fourth had four children. More than 10 percent (13.6 percent) had between five and 10 children. The remaining 30.7 percent had one child. See Exhibit 28 for the detailed statistics by city.

Exhibit 28: How many children do you have?												
Answer (Children)	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 95)		(N = 48)		(N = 25)		(N = 22)		(N = 9)		(N = 199)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1 to 2	26	27.4	12	25.0	7	28.0	13	59.1	3	33.3	61	30.7
3	34	35.8	12	25.0	10	40.0	3	13.6	4	44.4	63	31.7
4	24	25.3	15	31.3	5	20.0	3	13.6	1	11.1	48	24.1
5 to 10	11	11.6	9	18.8	3	12.0	3	13.6	1	11.1	27	13.6

The children's age varied widely, from less than 1 year of age to 35 years old. Nine mothers had toddlers, less than 1 year old. Nearly 15 percent (14.6 percent) had children 1 to 5 years of age. About one fourth (25.6 percent) had children between 6 and 10 years of age. The largest group was the adolescents: 27.9 percent of the mothers had children between 11 and 15 years-old; and 18.7 percent between 16 and 20 years old. Less than 10 percent (8.6 percent) had youngsters between 21 and 25 years old, and 20 mothers (3.1 percent) had young adults between 26 and 35. Exhibit 29 shows the details. In total the 199 participants had 637 children.

Exhibit 29: What are their ages?												
Answer (Years)	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 302)		(N = 178)		(N = 77)		(N = 54)		(N = 26)		(N = 637)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
< 1	6	2.0	2	1.1	1	1.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	9	1.4
1 to 5	53	17.5	19	10.7	13	16.9	6	11.1	2	7.7	93	14.6
6 to 10	80	26.5	41	23.0	23	29.9	11	20.4	8	30.8	163	25.6
11 to 15	95	31.5	47	26.4	17	22.1	14	25.9	5	19.2	178	27.9
16 to 20	43	14.2	40	22.5	15	19.5	16	29.6	5	19.2	119	18.7
21 to 25	20	6.6	19	10.7	6	7.8	4	7.4	6	23.1	55	8.6
26 to 35	5	1.7	10	5.6	2	2.6	3	5.6	0	0.0	20	3.1

About two-thirds (133 out of the 199 or 66.8 percent) of the families participating in the evaluation had children attending elementary schools. More than half (55.6 percent) of the families had one child attending elementary school, about one third (30.1 percent) had two children attending elementary school, 12 percent had three children, and three families (all in San Antonio) had four children attending elementary school. Exhibit 30 shows detailed statistics regarding elementary school attendance.

Exhibit 30: How many of your children are attending elementary schools?

Answer (Children)	San Antonio (N = 65)		Dallas (N = 34)		Houston (N = 18)		Austin (N = 11)		El Paso (N = 5)		Total (N = 133)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1	39	60.0	20	58.8	11	61.1	2	18.2	2	40.0	74	55.6
2	16	24.6	11	32.4	2	11.1	8	72.7	3	60.0	40	30.1
3	7	10.8	3	8.8	5	27.8	1	9.1	0	0.0	16	12.0
4	3	4.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	2.3

Ninety-one families had children attending middle schools. Out of those, 80.2 percent (or 73 families) had one child attending middle school, 18.7 percent had two children attending middle schools, and one family (in Dallas) had three children attending middle school. Exhibit 31 shows the details by city.

Exhibit 31: How many of your children are attending middle schools?

Answer (Children)	San Antonio (N = 49)		Dallas (N = 24)		Houston (N = 11)		Austin (N = 5)		El Paso (N = 2)		Total (N = 91)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1	39	79.6	19	79.2	10	90.9	3	60.0	2	100.0	73	80.2
2	10	20.4	4	16.7	1	9.1	2	40.0	0	0.0	17	18.7
3	0	0.0	1	4.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.1

Eighty families had children attending high schools. Out of those, 76.3 percent had one child attending high school, 22.5 percent had two children attending high schools, and one family in San Antonio had three children attending high school. Exhibit 32 shows the details by city.

Exhibit 32: How many of your children are attending high schools?

Answer (Children)	San Antonio (N = 32)		Dallas (N = 26)		Houston (N = 10)		Austin (N = 6)		El Paso (N = 6)		Total (N = 80)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1	23	71.9	19	73.1	9	90.0	5	83.3	5	83.3	61	76.3
2	8	25.0	7	26.9	1	10.0	1	16.7	1	16.7	18	22.5
3	1	3.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.3

Two families in Dallas had each one child attending vocational or technical school. One of the families had one child attending the Medical Assistant School, and the other knew the child was going to attend this type of school but was still in the selecting process. As Exhibit 33 shows, none of the other families had children attending vocational or technical school.

Exhibit 33: How many of your children are attending vocational/technical schools?

Answer (Children)	San Antonio (N = 0)		Dallas (N = 2)		Houston (N = 0)		Austin (N = 0)		El Paso (N = 0)		Total (N = 2)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1	0	0.0	2	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	100.0

Twenty-five families had children attending college. Out of those, 88 percent had one child attending college and 12 percent had two children attending college. Two families in Dallas and one family in Austin had two children attending college. Some colleges the participants mentioned in the telephone interview included: Palo Alto College, Everest University, St. Mary's University, Mountain View College, Otis College of Art and Design, University of Texas at Dallas, Central College, Texas A&M University, Dallas Community College, Brook Haven College, Houston Community College, University of Houston, East Early College, Sam Houston State University, and City College. Exhibit 34 shows the frequency distribution by city.

Exhibit 34: How many of your children are attending college?

Answer (Children)	San Antonio (N = 3)		Dallas (N = 10)		Houston (N = 4)		Austin (N = 6)		El Paso (N = 2)		Total (N = 25)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1	3	100.0	8	80.0	4	100.0	5	83.3	2	100.0	22	88.0
2	0	0.0	2	20.0	0	0.0	1	16.7	0	0.0	3	12.0

Exhibit 35 shows a more complex analysis. It summarizes much of the information in this subsection regarding the children of participant mothers who were attending school when the

interviews were conducted; 424 of these children were in K-12 institutions, and 454 were in K-16 institutions.

Based on the children’s age, IDRA estimated the number of them who were of school age for K-12, assuming an age range of 5 to 18 years for this period. A similar process was performed for K-16, for which an age range of 5 to 22 years was used. The purpose of this exercise was to determine the percent of AVANCE school-age children who were actually attending school at those two levels (K-12 and K-16). As the analysis shows, 89.5 percent of children predicted to be attending K-12 institutions were attending these schools, and 87.6 percent of children predicted to be in K-16 were in K-16 (Exhibit 35). This is a remarkable finding, demonstrating that those mothers were indeed supporting their children’s education and professional attainment goals, despite their modest means and limited socio-economic situations.

Exhibit 35: Summary of AVANCE Children Attending Educational Institutions in 2013

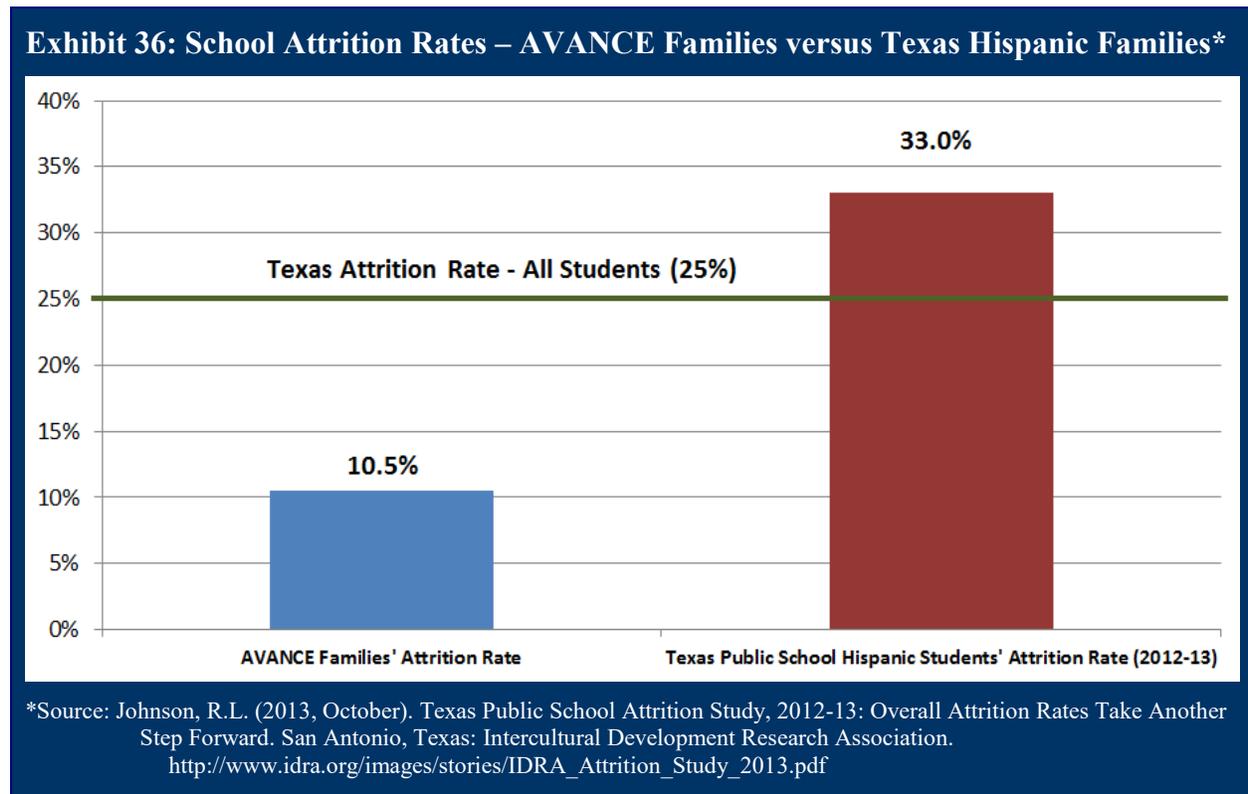
#	Elementary School		Middle School		High School		K-12 Total	Vocational / Technical		College		K-16 Total	
	Moms	Students	Moms	Students	Moms	Students		Moms	Students	Moms	Students		
1	74	74	73	73	61	61	208	2	2	22	22	232	
2	40	80	17	34	18	36	150			3	6	156	
3	16	48	1	3	1	3	54					54	
4	3	12					12					12	
Total	133	214	91	110	80	100	424	2	2	25	28	454	
Total School age students				5 to 18 years old				474	5 to 22 years old				518
Percent of school age AVANCE children in school							89.5						87.6

In order to appreciate the significance of the results shown in Exhibit 35, an analysis comparing the overall Texas public school attrition rate with that of the AVANCE families was carried out.

IDRA performs the most accurate, consistent and reliable Texas public school attrition analysis in Texas. IDRA has been performing this analysis since 1986 through its annual Texas Public School Attrition Study (Johnson, 2013). In order to calculate the attrition at public schools throughout the state, the study compares the number of students who begin ninth grade with the number of students who arrive at the 12th grade four years later. Attrition is the difference. In its 2012-13 study, IDRA reported a general attrition rate of 25 percent. It also reported attrition rates by ethnicity as follows: White students at 14 percent, African American students at 26 percent, and Hispanic students at 33 percent.

A proxy to the AVANCE attrition rate can be calculated by subtracting the percent of children in K-12 from 100. This produces a 10.5 percent (100 – 89.5) attrition rate. The K-12 value is used because the IDRA attrition rate only includes the ninth to 12th grade levels.

Exhibit 36 compares the AVANCE family’s attrition rate to the state attrition rate for Texas Hispanic students and for all students. The exhibit shows that the AVANCE families had many more children in schools than would be predicted, given the Hispanic students’ attrition rate in the state. Nearly 90 percent (89.5 percent) of the AVANCE families’ children stayed in school 10 years after their mothers participated in AVANCE, when only 67 percent of Hispanic children stayed in school this past school year in Texas. In fact, the AVANCE families’ attrition rate (10.5 percent) was even below the Texas attrition rate for all students (25 percent). This is very remarkable when the socio-economic situation of the AVANCE sample is considered, which can be reasonably expected to be lower than the Hispanic population of the state and certainly below the state general population.



AVANCE Participant Support for Children Succeed in School

In addition to sending their children to schools, AVANCE mothers played an important role assuring their child’s educational success. Exhibit 37 shows that most mothers (93.4 percent) believed their children were ready for school upon enrollment.

Exhibit 37: When entering school, was your child school ready?												
Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 82)		(N = 48)		(N = 24)		(N = 20)		(N = 9)		(N = 183)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Yes	78	95.1	43	89.6	21	87.5	20	100.0	9	100.0	171	93.4
No	4	4.9	5	10.4	3	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	12	6.6

The mothers credited AVANCE with helping them get their children ready for school. More than 90 percent (90.7 percent) indicated so, as shown in Exhibit 38.

Exhibit 38: If yes, did AVANCE help you prepare your child for school?												
Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 82)		(N = 48)		(N = 24)		(N = 20)		(N = 9)		(N = 183)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Yes	71	86.6	44	91.7	22	91.7	20	100.0	9	100.0	166	90.7
No	11	13.4	4	8.3	2	8.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	17	9.3

This is not to say that everything went smoothly. A substantial number of families (19.1 percent) reported that some of their children were retained or repeated a grade in school. On the other hand, more than 80 percent (80.9 percent) indicated that none of their children were ever retained. Exhibit 39 shows the details for each city in the study.

Exhibit 39: Has your child ever been retained (repeated a grade)?												
Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 78)		(N = 48)		(N = 23)		(N = 20)		(N = 9)		(N = 178)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Yes	17	21.8	8	16.7	6	26.1	2	10.0	1	11.1	34	19.1
No	61	78.2	40	83.3	17	73.9	18	90.0	8	88.9	144	80.9

Retention happened primarily in the early grades, with K-2 accounting for more than half (55.9 percent). This might have been one of the reasons for some mothers to seek AVANCE help in the first place, but we did not ask this question (since we had no reason to hypothesize this trend

before the evaluation). Fifth grade was also a challenging grade, accounting for 14.7 percent of all retentions, as shown in Exhibit 40.

Exhibit 40: If yes, what grade level?												
Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 17)		(N = 8)		(N = 6)		(N = 2)		(N = 1)		(N = 34)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
K	2	11.8	0	0.0	3	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	14.7
1	5	29.4	2	25.0	0	0.0	1	50.0	0	0.0	8	23.5
2	2	11.8	2	25.0	2	33.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	17.6
3	2	11.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	100.0	3	8.8
4	1	5.9	0	0.0	1	16.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	5.9
5	3	17.6	1	12.5	0	0.0	1	50.0	0	0.0	5	14.7
6	0	0.0	1	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.9
7	0	0.0	1	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.9
8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
9	2	11.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	5.9
10	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
11	0	0.0	1	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.9

Some children also had behavioral issues. More than 11 percent (11.4 percent) of the families reported some type of serious behavioral issues that at least one of their children confronted. Some of the issues included attention deficit disorders, anxiety, hyperactivity, irritability, aggressiveness and bipolar personality disorders. Exhibit 41 shows the statistics by city.

Exhibit 41: Did/does your child have behavioral issues in school?												
Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 78)		(N = 48)		(N = 21)		(N = 20)		(N = 9)		(N = 176)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Yes	7	9.0	7	14.6	2	9.5	3	15.0	1	11.1	20	11.4
No	71	91.0	41	85.4	19	90.5	17	85.0	8	88.9	156	88.6

Despite those issues, the mothers reported that their children were doing well at school. Nearly 90 percent (87.8 percent) reported that their children were doing above average or excellent (top of the class) at school. Only 1.8 percent indicated that they were failing or below average. The remaining 10.5 percent reported their performance was average. This is a remarkable finding even granting most mothers have an optimistic view of their children. Exhibit 42 shows the detailed statistics.

Exhibit 42: How is/are your child(ren) doing in school?												
Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 77)		(N = 46)		(N = 22)		(N = 19)		(N = 8)		(N = 172)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Poor (failing)	0	0.0	1	2.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.6
Fair (below average)	0	0.0	2	4.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	1.2
Average	6	7.8	2	4.3	4	18.2	4	21.1	2	25.0	18	10.5
Good (above average)	42	54.5	22	47.8	6	27.3	6	31.6	3	37.5	79	45.9
Excellent (top of class)	29	37.7	19	41.3	12	54.5	9	47.4	3	37.5	72	41.9

About 80 percent (79.4 percent) of the mothers reported that some of their children received an award from the school. Exhibit 43 lists the awards, standardized by like grouping and in descending order by frequency. The exhibit shows that 141 children achieved honor roll, which, with 47.6 percent, was the most frequent. Perfect attendance award was the second most frequent, with 31.1 percent. Citizenship award, with 8.8 percent, rounds out the three most frequent awards. There were seven additional types of awards, including some for math and science achievement, writing and lecturer, and music and arts. In total 296 awards were reported by the 199 mothers.

Exhibit 43: Awards Received by Children at School		
Type of Award	Total	%
Honor Roll	141	47.6
Perfect Attendance award	92	31.1
Citizenship Award	26	8.8
Science or Math Award	8	2.7
Gifted & Talented Classes	7	2.4
Sport Trophy or Medals	7	2.4
Principal Appreciation Award	5	1.7
Government Appreciation	4	1.4
Better Writer & Lecturer Award	3	1.0
Music or Arts Award	3	1.0
Total	296	100.0

In addition, most mothers (75.8 percent) reported that their children were involved in extra-curricular activities at their schools. Exhibit 44 shows the distribution by city. With around 90 percent, Dallas and Houston families had the most involvement (with 89.6 percent and 90.9 percent, respectively). But all cities reported a high percentage of the children involved in extra-curricular activities, with between 65.0 percent in Austin to 90.9 percent in Houston.

Exhibit 44: Did/does your child participate in extra-curricular school activities?												
Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 79)		(N = 48)		(N = 22)		(N = 20)		(N = 9)		(N = 178)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Yes	53	67.1	43	89.6	20	90.9	13	65.0	6	66.7	135	75.8
No	26	32.9	5	10.4	2	9.1	7	35.0	3	33.3	43	24.2

The extra-curricular activities are listed in Exhibit 45. They are standardized by like grouping and in descending order by frequency. The exhibit shows that 46 children participated in intramural athletics, gymnastics and indoor sports, which – with 21.6 percent – was the most popular. School band, choir and orchestra was the second most popular at 18.8 percent. Baseball, basketball, football, soccer and volleyball teams, at 15.0 percent, round out the three most popular extra-curricular activities grouping. However, there were 17 additional groupings of extra-curricular activities, including music appreciation and lessons; academic and science clubs; ballet and dancing clubs; art club and art lessons; tennis, track and field, and outdoors; tutoring and mentoring after school; computer, robotic and technology clubs; karate and martial arts; and literature and history clubs, to name the most popular. In total, 213 children participated in extra-curricular activities, according to the 199 mothers.

Exhibit 45: Extra-Curricular Activities at School		
Type of Award	Total	%
Intramural Athletics, Gymnastics and Indoor Sports	46	21.6
School Band, Choir and Orchestra	40	18.8
Baseball, Basketball, Football, Soccer and Volleyball Teams	32	15.0
Music Appreciation and Lessons	18	8.5
Academic and Science Clubs	16	7.5
Ballet and Dancing Clubs	13	6.1

Exhibit 45: Extra-Curricular Activities at School		
Type of Award	Total	%
Art Club and Art Lessons	8	3.8
Tennis, Track and Field, and Outdoors	6	2.8
Tutoring and Mentoring After School	6	2.8
Computer, Robotic and Technology Clubs	4	1.9
Karate and Martial Arts	4	1.9
Literature and History Clubs	4	1.9
Drama and Theater Clubs	3	1.4
Honor Societies (Local & National)	3	1.4
Army (ROTC) Program	2	0.9
Cheerleaders and Mascots Clubs	2	0.9
Criminal Justice and the Courts	2	0.9
Girls & Boys Scouts	2	0.9
Cooking and Healthy Eating Clubs	1	0.5
Special Olympics	1	0.5
Total	213	100

Finally, the following vignettes represent a synthesis of what the 24 participants in the face-to-face interviews expressed regarding their knowledge of child development and parenting skills before and after joining AVANCE. The comments are organized by cities and attempt to represent the mothers' thoughts as close to their original words as possible. Only first names were included to preserve the participant's privacy while maintaining the documentary nature of this report (Exhibit 46).

Exhibit 46: Mothers Speaking about Knowledge of Child Development and Parenting Skills

San Antonio

1. Alma was raised in a family where severe discipline was the norm. At AVANCE, she realized that she was raising her children the same way. AVANCE helped her improve her parenting skills. Alma learned that children were beginning to develop socially, mentally and physically and that they, as well as adults, could make mistakes and learn from them.
2. Claudia completed the nine-month PCEP at AVANCE, motivated by a friend who told her that it would help her become a better parent. Since she had two children and had many questions about how to become a better parent she jumped at the opportunity. One

Exhibit 46: Mothers Speaking about Knowledge of Child Development and Parenting Skills

of Claudia's questions was how to work well with children to help with their development. At AVANCE she found answers to her questions, and her parenting skills improved.

3. Cynthia admitted that prior to the AVANCE program she was young and inexperienced. At AVANCE, she learned parenting skills, how to have patience and how to show grace toward her children. AVANCE taught her the importance of spending time with each child, to do activities together, the importance of their education and building their motor skills and senses.
4. Diane credited the program for becoming a better parent. "They showed me how to spend time with my children because I had three and I was a very young mother," she said. They taught her how to effectively discipline her children, although she admitted her children were always well behaved. All five of Diane's children participated in the program.
5. Elizabeth recalled being a very young mom when she was recruited for the program. Pregnant at 17 and a mom at 18, she did not like anyone knocking on her door, but AVANCE kept inviting her to join their program. Once she began attending classes, she realized that it was fun, and her baby was close by in the nursery downstairs, and she was actually learning to care for her baby.
6. After enrolling, Erika was so excited about the things she was learning that she continued with the program with her second baby and was, at the time of the interview, seeking information to remain active in the program for her third child. One major thing Erika learned was effective discipline techniques, which emphasized communication and understanding rather than physical punishment.
7. Irene commented that prior to joining AVANCE she was a bit unaware, "One evolves; one begins to pay more attention on the things one shouldn't do, such as not to yell, to have more patience and to count to ten before reacting." Prior to AVANCE, she would check her children's homework but did not pay much attention. After AVANCE, she got really involved and tried to help as much as possible. She credited AVANCE for opening her eyes.
8. Mónica stated that prior to joining AVANCE she had neither the knowledge of child development nor patience as a first-time mother. The program taught her about the different developmental stages a child goes through and how to use proper discipline and to have more patience with her children.
9. At AVANCE, Sandra went through a powerful journey of self-transformation. She regained her self-esteem and changed her whole attitude. As a result, she began feeling valued within her family as a woman, wife and mother. As a changed person, she improved her children's literacy and helped them develop lifelong positive learning habits – skills she learned at AVANCE.

Exhibit 46: Mothers Speaking about Knowledge of Child Development and Parenting Skills

Dallas

1. María acknowledged that her children who attended AVANCE with her were more prepared, motivated and confident when they entered school than her children who did not participate in the program.
2. Martina felt the greatest child development benefit she gained from the program was learning how to interact with her children and how her children learned to interact and socialize with their peers.
3. Mónica credited the AVANCE program for helping her learn child development. The parenting classes were useful and helped her be a better mother. She learned the importance of getting more involved in her child's education. She learned effective discipline and how to communicate with her daughter better.
4. Norma credited AVANCE for her improved parenting skills because, after AVANCE, she started reading to her children, become more patient with them, and actively participated in her children's school. AVANCE also helped her to improve her self-esteem as a parent and as a role model for her children.
5. From AVANCE classes, Patricia learned to pay more attention to the needs of her children, even during her busy moments in her daily routines. Patricia indicated that she learned a lot from the training sessions – from making toys to learning English. In the community speaker sessions, she learned from nutritionists, doctors and police officers.
6. During her time with AVANCE, Rocío learned that parents are their children's first teachers; as such, they are co-responsible for their education. She learned to be reasonable yet firm when guiding her children.

Houston

1. Prior to her involvement with AVANCE, Hilda wanted to do everything for her son. AVANCE parenting classes taught her how to help her son be more independent. She also learned the importance of spending quality time with her children, setting goals for herself and setting high expectations for both of her children.
2. Lorena felt that all the components of the AVANCE program benefitted her immensely. She developed an understanding of early childhood development that led her to realize the value of spending quality time, including playing with her children. She also learned to set goals for her family and started visiting the library. She felt influenced by what she learned about positive discipline and the importance of talking with her children and helping them with their homework. She discovered the joy of toy making and how toys can help to read, and she was amazed at how a very simple toy had so much to teach.
3. María's involvement with AVANCE empowered her to take a leading role in the education of her three daughters. The classes gave her information and guidance in making informed decisions about the welfare of her children.

Exhibit 46: Mothers Speaking about Knowledge of Child Development and Parenting Skills

Austin

1. Josefina felt she had good parenting skills and knowledge before entering the AVANCE program. However, she felt that these skills improved with the AVANCE experience, as she learned new ways of interacting with her children and communicating with her family.
2. The program offered María an opportunity to help her and her daughter build self-confidence and learn to socialize more with others. She found that spending quality time with her daughter was most beneficial for the both of them.
3. The program offered Nancy the opportunity to learn the importance of her role as a parent. This greatest benefit she experienced was how to best deal with her children in a moment of anger and to turn away before responding aggressively.
4. Linda believed AVANCE improved her daughter's socialization skills. It also made her an advocate for her child's education. She gained a voice when interacting with the school, and the knowledge and predisposition to assist her daughter with her schoolwork.

El Paso

1. Before her participation in AVANCE, Beatriz's understanding of parenting was centered on how to protect her children from harm. As her comprehension of child development improved, she discovered that taking care of children involved a much broader array of skills and understanding. By attending the toy making classes, she understood how children learn through play. In other classes, she learned about patience and how to discipline by understanding children's emotions and the way concepts develop in their minds. She learned the importance of spending quality time with all her children and to be involved in their education in school.
2. María enumerated the following parenting skills learned in AVANCE: interacting with her children and spending quality time with them; setting goals for herself, which helped her to learn how to grow; establishing goals for her family – she wants them all to graduate and have a career; and especially, how to discipline appropriately, not by yelling or hitting. She said she became a better mother all around, as a result of her participation in AVANCE.

Focus Area 2: Support for Two-Generation Education and Growth

Findings:

1. AVANCE offered or supported participants' furthering their education, including citizenship classes (6.7 percent), college courses (9.7 percent), GED classes (26.1 percent), bilingual education (28.2 percent) and ESL classes (31.8 percent).
2. Most participants (69.6 percent) reported that they speak English *fairly well* or *very well*, and many (44.8 percent) indicated that AVANCE helped them improve their English mastery.
3. Mothers improved their education since graduating from AVANCE; the number of mothers with higher education degrees increased from six to 19, an improvement of 216.7 percent, while the number of mothers with less than high school education decreased from 103 to 81, or 21.4 percent.
4. Mothers improved their education in proportion to their initial attainment. Most mothers (59.1 percent) who were below high school before their participation in AVANCE, completed a GED certificate. On the other hand, most mothers (56.3 percent) with a high school diploma before participating in AVANCE, completed a higher education degree.
5. AVANCE provided important practical guidance through several activities to help mothers with the education of their children. Two of these activities were toy-making classes and field trips. Most mothers (95.3 percent) made toys that they used to instill in their children important concepts about the world, their sensory perception as well as their feelings. Many mothers (63.4 percent) participated in field trips organized to acquaint them with the resources available in the community.

The second focus area, support for the education and growth of both mother and child, is one of the most important areas as it is a PCEP essential component and, like the first focus area, is infused in most of the others. Therefore, a significant number of items in both the telephone interview and the face-to-face interview instruments were devoted to this area. IDRA first looked at the level of participation in the PCEP constituents most directly related to this focus area and then analyzed the effects of such participation on the mothers and their children as they grow up and went to school. The analysis includes mothers' participation in educational activities, such as learning English, getting their GED and going on to attend college. In addition, we analyzed their

participation in activities that would lead to helping their children become more literate and better readers and contribute to their overall growth, such as making toys and reading to them regularly.

AVANCE Support for Mothers' Education

Mothers were asked whether they participated in classes offered as part of the AVANCE second-year program components. Exhibit 47 shows a compilation of their responses by city. At least two caveats need to be made to correctly interpose these results. First, many mothers might not have participated in those classes because they did not need them. For example, mothers with high school diplomas would not need to participate in GED classes. Second, even if they needed them, some classes were not offered at the time they were in the program. For example, we know from the face-to-face interviews that some mothers intended to take ESL classes but their particular chapter stopped providing them for some unknown (to them) reason. Thus, these statistics provide only a loose sense of demands for those services, not necessarily predisposition against them.

Exhibit 47: Participation in Formal Education and Civic Classes													
Classes	San Antonio			Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Citizenship	Yes	4	4.9	2	4.3	2	11.8	3	20.0	0	0.0	11	6.7
	No	77	95.1	45	95.7	15	88.2	12	80.0	5	100.0	154	93.3
College Courses	Yes	14	16.7	0	0.0	1	5.9	1	7.1	0	0.0	16	9.7
	No	70	83.3	45	100.0	16	94.1	13	92.9	5	100.0	149	90.3
GED	Yes	13	15.5	10	21.3	14	60.9	8	42.1	2	28.6	47	26.1
	No	71	84.5	37	78.7	9	39.1	11	57.9	5	71.4	133	73.9
Bilingual Education	Yes	12	14.8	5	10.6	15	62.5	12	70.6	6	75.0	50	28.2
	No	69	85.2	42	89.4	9	37.5	5	29.4	2	25.0	127	71.8
ESL	Yes	10	12.3	14	30.4	14	63.6	13	65.0	5	71.4	56	31.8
	No	71	87.7	32	69.6	8	36.4	7	35.0	2	28.6	120	68.2

Less than 7 percent (6.7 percent) of participants who responded this question (11 out of 165 participants) indicated taking citizenship classes. This represented the smallest percentage of participation, which probably shows that the majority of the mothers were not undocumented persons. Based on the case studies, we know that most mothers attended AVANCE to improve their parenting skills and themselves in general, not to seek help regarding their legal status.

The second lowest participation was taking college courses, at 9.7 percent. Since we know that most mothers had low formal education, this nearly 10 percent of mothers’ taking college courses is a good indication that AVANCE influenced them to improve their formal education. There is more about this later in this section.

The fact that more than a quarter of the participants (26.1 percent) took GED classes both confirms the assertions made in the previous paragraph (regarding the mothers’ low formal education level) and also demonstrates the important service AVANCE provided to those mothers to lift them up educationally. This percentage represented the median in the participation level scale.

Nearly 30 percent (28.2 percent) of the participants took bilingual education classes, and just over 30 percent (31.8 percent) took ESL classes. This shows that a substantial number of the mothers were recent immigrants or descendants of recent immigrants. Learning English is useful for any person who wants to function effectively in this society and who wants to help their children with their education and development. Therefore, the services provided by AVANCE were invaluable for those mothers, as they attested in the face-to-face interviews (see their comments in the summaries at the end of this section).

Regarding their language development, participants were asked how well they spoke English as shown in Exhibit 48.

Exhibit 48: How well do you speak in English?												
	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
Answer	(N = 91)		(N = 48)		(N = 25)		(N = 21)		(N = 9)		(N = 194)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Not at all	5	5.5	4	8.3	1	4.0	1	4.8	1	11.1	12	6.2
Poorly	17	18.7	15	31.3	9	36.0	1	4.8	5	55.6	47	24.2
Fairly well	14	15.4	25	52.1	12	48.0	14	66.7	3	33.3	68	35.1
Very well	55	60.4	4	8.3	3	12.0	5	23.8	0	0.0	67	34.5

As Exhibit 48 indicates, about 70 percent (69.6 percent) of the participants indicated that they spoke English “Fairly well” or “Very well.” This is one of those findings that is difficult to interpret. First, there was not a baseline to compare to. So, we do not know the mothers’ English proficiency levels when they entered AVANCE, although those levels were surely much lower

than 10 years later, when they were interviewed. Second, over time, most people would improve their language skills through to natural exposure. Nevertheless, this is a positive finding. It also shows that about a third of the mothers (30.4 percent) still continue to struggle with their English mastery, which is not uncommon to many immigrants to this country. To get a direct answer to the question of whether or not they felt AVANCE helped them to learned English, we asked them. Exhibit 49 shows their responses.

Exhibit 49: Did AVANCE help you to speak, read, or write in English?												
	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
Answer	(N = 90)		(N = 47)		(N = 25)		(N = 21)		(N = 9)		(N = 192)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Yes	25	27.8	22	46.8	18	72.0	13	61.9	8	88.9	86	44.8
No	65	72.2	25	53.2	7	28.0	8	38.1	1	11.1	106	55.2

Although only about a third of the participants took bilingual education/ESL classes, as shown in the previous discussion, nearly 45 percent (44.8 percent) indicated that their experience in AVANCE helped them speak, read and write in English. This makes sense because as they participated in other program activities, which generally required some type of communication, English would be naturally learned.

Participants were also asked about their Spanish proficiency. As expected, given their ethnic background, almost all of the mothers (96.3 percent) spoke Spanish well. Only one mother indicated that she did not speak Spanish at all. See Exhibit 50.

Exhibit 50: How well do you speak in Spanish?												
	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
Answer	(N = 90)		(N = 48)		(N = 25)		(N = 21)		(N = 9)		(N = 193)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Not at all	1	1.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.5
Poorly	6	6.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	3.1
Fairly well	30	33.3	6	12.5	2	8.0	1	4.8	2	22.2	41	21.2
Very well	53	58.9	42	87.5	23	92.0	20	95.2	7	77.8	145	75.1

Before concluding this discussion about the classes offered or taken, it is important to mention that participants were asked whether they took any other classes besides the standard classes

listed above. A few said they did. The three they mentioned were computer courses, domestic violence prevention workshops and nutrition courses.

Mothers’ Education Attainment Prior Participating in AVANCE and Today

Mothers were asked about their educational level before attending AVANCE and at the time of the interview. Exhibit 51 shows their educational attainment before participating in AVANCE.

Exhibit 51: What was your educational level before participating in AVANCE?												
Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 89)		(N = 48)		(N = 24)		(N = 20)		(N = 9)		(N = 190)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Below high school	50	56.2	29	60.4	13	54.2	7	35.0	4	44.4	103	54.2
GED certificate	2	2.2	0	0.0	3	12.5	0	0.0	1	11.1	6	3.2
High school diploma	34	38.2	16	33.3	3	12.5	12	60.0	2	22.2	67	35.3
Vocational/technical school	1	1.1	2	4.2	3	12.5	0	0.0	2	22.2	8	4.2
Community college degree	2	2.2	1	2.1	1	4.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	2.1
University degree	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	4.2	1	5.0	0	0.0	2	1.1

Exhibit 51 shows that more than half (54.2 percent) of the participants had an education attainment below high school completion. Most of the rest (38.5 percent) had a high school diploma or a GED certificate. There were only six participants (3.2 percent) who had achieved a higher education degree.

Exhibit 52 shows the participants’ current educational attainment. Although the largest percentage is below high school completion, its value went down to 42.6 percent (from 54.2 percent), a reduction of 11.6 percentage points. The other major reduction was in the percentage participants with high school diplomas. It went down to 28.4 percent, compared to 35.3 percent, a reduction of 6.9 percentage points. Those mothers went on to obtain high education degrees (from colleges or universities), which increased to 10.0 percent (from 3.2 percent), or to earn certifications from vocational or technical schools, which increased to 10.0 percent as well (from 4.2 percent).

Exhibit 52: What is your current educational level?

Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 89)		(N = 48)		(N = 24)		(N = 20)		(N = 9)		(N = 190)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Below high school	37	41.6	27	56.3	12	50.0	2	10.0	3	33.3	81	42.6
GED certificate	12	13.5	1	2.1	1	4.2	1	5.0	2	22.2	17	8.9
High school diploma	24	27.0	15	31.3	3	12.5	10	50.0	2	22.2	54	28.4
Vocational/technical school	5	5.6	3	6.3	4	16.7	5	25.0	2	22.2	19	10.0
Community college degree	7	7.9	1	2.1	3	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	11	5.8
University degree	4	4.5	1	2.1	1	4.2	2	10.0	0	0.0	8	4.2

A comparative analysis of the participants’ educational attainment before their participation in AVANCE and today is presented in Exhibit 53.

Exhibit 53: Mother’s Education Attainment – Comparative Analysis (N = 190)

Educational Attainment	Prior AVANCE		Currently		Difference*	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Did not complete high school	103	54.2	81	42.6	-22	-21.4%
Obtained GED	6	3.2	17	8.9	11	183.3%
Completed high school	67	35.3	54	28.4	-13	-19.4%
Completed vocational or technical school	8	4.2	19	10.0	11	137.5%
Higher education (college/university)	6	3.2	19	10.0	13	216.7%

* Chi-square test of significance: $X^2 = 18.24, p < 0.01$

The analysis shows a statistically significant difference between the participants’ educational level prior their participation in AVANCE and today. A chi-square test was required because the variable *educational attainment* has an ordinal data level of measurement. In addition, this variable is not normally distributed for this population. Most subjects are grouped under the *Did Not Complete High School* category. Therefore, a non-parametric test, such as the chi square, was required. Exhibit 54 presents the participants’ educational attainment percentage changes in a graphic format. The values were taken from the last column of the exhibit above.

Exhibit 54: Mother's Education Attainment – Percentage Changes (N = 190)

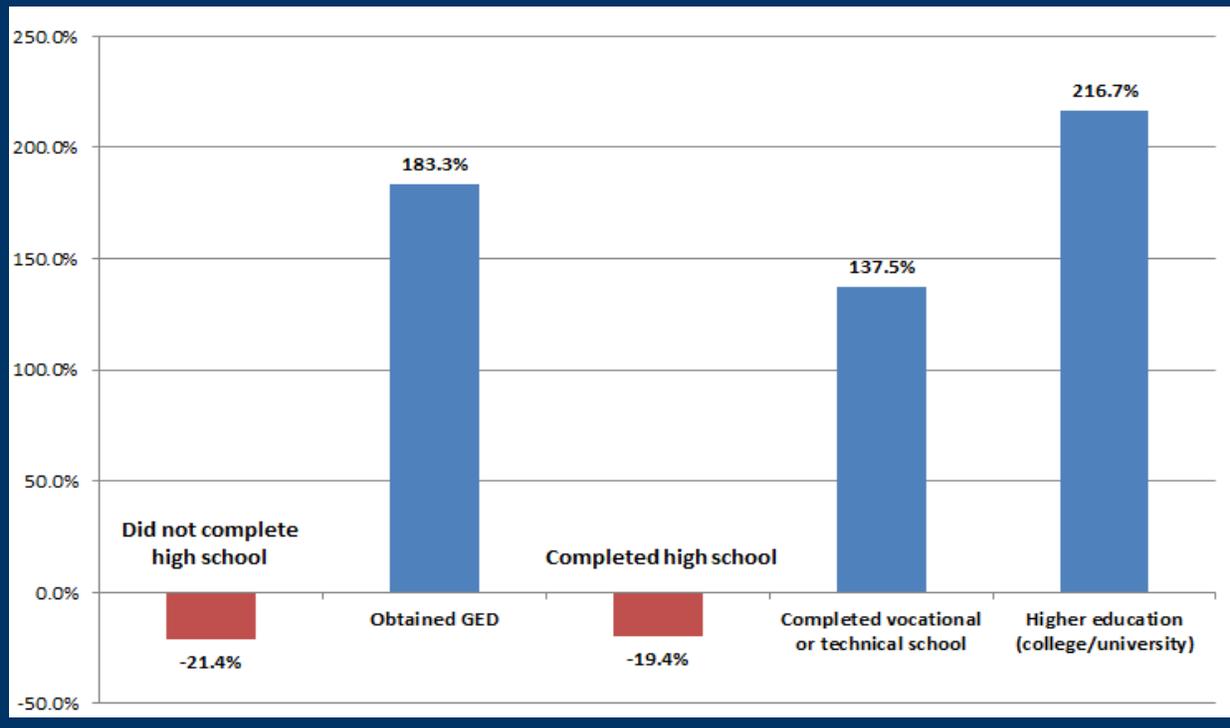


Exhibit 54 shows a 21.4 percent decrease in participants below high school completion. This is the largest decline among the five educational attainment levels – highly positive because no one should be at this level. The other decrease was in the number of mothers with a high school diploma as their highest education attainment. This also is positive because these mothers went to obtain vocational or technical certifications or higher education diplomas.

The largest gain (216.7 percent) was in the percentage of mothers who obtained a higher education diploma from a college or university, followed by the percentage who obtained GED (183.3 percent), and the percentage who completed a vocational or technical certification (137.5 percent). Exhibit 54 suggests a migration from high school or below toward higher educational levels. Exhibit 55 shows exactly in what proportion those advancements occurred.

Exhibit 55: Mother's Advancing Their Educational Attainment

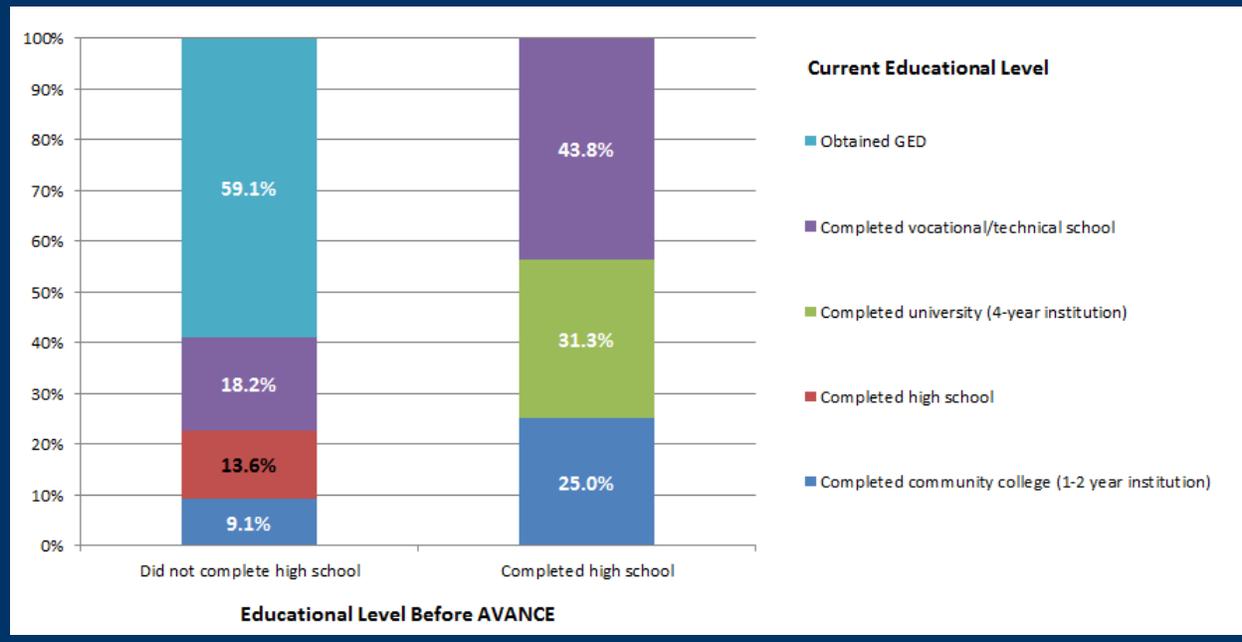


Exhibit 55 shows the current educational level for those mothers who advanced in their education from high school completion and below before they entered AVANCE to the time of their interviews. For mothers who were below high school completion before their participation in AVANCE, 59.1 percent advanced to obtain a GED certificate, 18.2 percent obtained a vocational or technical diploma, 13.6 percent completed high school, and 9.1 percent went on to earn a degree in a community college. For mothers who completed high school before participating in AVANCE, 56.3 percent obtained a higher education degree. More than half of those were from a university (31.3 percent) and the others from a community college (25.0 percent). The remaining 43.8 percent went on to complete a vocational or technical certification. The analysis shows that, although both groups advanced, having a high school education made a difference in how far they achieved educationally after AVANCE.

AVANCE Support to Mothers' Educating their Children

In addition to helping mothers understand important early childhood education concepts in the context of child rearing, as discussed in Focus Area 1, AVANCE provided practical activities that brought those concepts down to actual implementation. Perhaps the most important of them was toy making activities. Exhibit 56 shows the number of mothers who indicated they made toys in AVANCE toy making classes.

Exhibit 56: Did you make toys in the toy making classes?

Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 91)		(N = 47)		(N = 25)		(N = 21)		(N = 9)		(N = 193)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	85	93.4	47	100.0	24	96.0	19	90.5	9	100.0	184	95.3
No	6	6.6	0	0.0	1	4.0	2	9.5	0	0.0	9	4.7

Exhibit 56 shows that virtually every mother (95.3 percent) made toys as part of the AVANCE classes. These toys, some of which are illustrated in pictures throughout this report, were intended for the mothers to help instill in their children important concepts about the world and about their sensory perception as well as their feelings. In a face-to-face interview (San Antonio Case Study #5), one mother from San Antonio, Cynthia, described making a sensory book:

“I still have an activity book that they gave us. The book still smells to this day. You can still smell the cards and the pepper in there. It was made out of poster board. We colored the pictures, we glued them on there, and then the little scents. We had little cotton balls for them. One particular scent we used was baby powder. We got baby powder and we dipped it very well while we were sewing the sachets and then we sewed them up and attached them to the book. The book covers were cardboard, and at the end, it actually had yarn string that you put on there. You could use different colors if you wanted. We had a lot of arts and crafts.”

Another important activity that provided mothers with ideas about how to support their children’s education was the field trips. Field trips were intended to acquaint mothers with the resources available in the community, so they could use them for their own needs and those of their children, including their educational needs. When participants were asked whether they participated in those trips, the majority (63.4 percent) indicated that they did (Exhibit 57).

Exhibit 57: Did you participate in field trips (such as to the library or grocery stores)?

Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 92)		(N = 48)		(N = 23)		(N = 20)		(N = 8)		(N = 191)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	59	64.1	25	52.1	19	82.6	12	60.0	6	75.0	121	63.4
No	33	35.9	23	47.9	4	17.4	8	40.0	2	25.0	70	36.6

In summary, the various analyses in this section showed that AVANCE provided important support to the mothers’ participating in the PCEP so that they could continue their education.

Mothers continued their education to a significant degree using that support. AVANCE also provided mothers with training and practical experience so they could support their children's education. Mothers used that support well. Their children excelled in school as shown in the previous focus area. Testimony to this is also shown in the following vignettes, which represent a synthesis of what the 24 participants in the face-to-face interviews expressed regarding the support for two-generation education and growth provided by AVANCE (Exhibit 58).

Exhibit 58: Mothers Speaking About Support for Dual-Generation Education and Growth

San Antonio

1. Through the participation and training Alma received from the program, she learned the importance of reading to and spending time with her children. As a result, her children were very literate and have been awarded with numerous honors. Her 7-year-old daughter was reading at a fifth grade level, another daughter was attending middle school, and her son had a scholarship for college. Alma's experience at AVANCE prompted her to complete her education. She is presently enrolled in a master's program at a local university.
2. Through the AVANCE experience, Claudia deepened her relationship with her children and began to understand the importance of reading and showing them an interest in their grades and accomplishments in school. Knowing no English and only having a middle school education in Mexico, she had limited opportunities available to her, but AVANCE gave her the information and confidence to begin English and GED classes in her community. Through her efforts she was able to attain her GED, took nursing classes and aspires to be a registered nurse.
3. Cynthia's daughter, who entered the AVANCE program as an infant, became an avid reader and enjoyed reading more than other children. As far as her own literacy skills, Cynthia obtained her GED and continued her education for a period of time but had to interrupt her studies to work fulltime.
4. Diane's participation with the AVANCE program taught her the importance of reading to her children. Diane said they taught her how to read to her children adding that as her children have grown older, they still like going to the library. Even though Diane did not hold a high school diploma or GED, she credited AVANCE for learning on-the-job skills. AVANCE partnered with Palo Alto College in a program called Untapped Potential, "They would teach us skills on how to get back to high school and what you do in college courses and jobs available."

Exhibit 58: Mothers Speaking About Support for Dual-Generation Education and Growth

5. Before attending AVANCE, Elizabeth acknowledged she did not know how to read to her child. She credited AVANCE for learning so much about raising children. This paid off, she said. Her three children were doing well in school, especially her first born who was already looking into attending Texas A&M Corpus Christi or Baylor University. Regarding her own education, Elizabeth indicated that AVANCE staff members helped her prepare financial aid paperwork and made sure she submitted all the necessary documents every semester. She received a Stone Court scholarship through AVANCE and the necessary assistance to get a home computer. She received her associate's degree in 2003 and was working on her bachelor's degree from the University of the Incarnate Word.
6. Before the AVANCE program, Erika did not know the resources available in the community that could help her children in school. After AVANCE, she started going regularly with her children to the public library to check out books and reading to them 30 minutes every night. As a family, they participated in recreational activities in the community. As far as her educational background, Erika completed high school in Mexico and was seeking to learn more English to get her GED in the United States.
7. Through the AVANCE program, Irene learned the importance of reading to her daughter and instilled in her the love of reading. She was so successful that her daughter recently checked out 17 books from the library to read in three weeks. Irene earned her high school diploma in Mexico and studied nursing. Her background helped her acquire a nurse assistant license, which she needed to renew. One of her educational aspirations is to learn more English as she can renew her license.
8. Mónica credited AVANCE for assisting her son with his speech impediment. She attributed his progress to a teacher who had a lot of patience, regularly read and worked with him to develop his language skills. As a result, her son developed a deep passion for reading and enjoys reading many books.
9. Sandra laid a strong reading foundation very early on. AVANCE taught her that literacy was very important for her children. She read to them daily, and there were always books in their rooms. Because of this, her daughter read at a college level and her 9-year-old was already reading chapter books. At AVANCE, Sandra learned English to seek her GED and began her quest to further her education. Knowing the importance of a formal education and wanting to be a positive role model for her family, she enrolled in college and was one year away from attaining a bachelor's degree. After that, she planned to go on to earn her master's degree. She learned through AVANCE was that, through perseverance, one could achieve her goals.

Exhibit 58: Mothers Speaking About Support for Dual-Generation Education and Growth

Dallas

1. María understood the power of reading and began to read daily to her children. She also gained the confidence to become a school volunteer and support the school and her children in any way that she could. María's life in Mexico was quite difficult. At a young age, she lost her father which left her mother to take care of 10 children. When María was in the sixth grade, she had to quit school. While at AVANCE, she began ESL classes but had to quit due to illness. However, she indicated she wanted to enroll in the classes again.
2. Martina indicated that the AVANCE team emphasized the benefits of reading to children. Although Martina had trouble reading to her children in English, she appreciated how AVANCE encouraged her to start daily reading at home. She would read what she could and invent the rest of the story to keep her children engaged. Since they learned to read for themselves, she enjoyed watching them interact with the books. Although she did not participate in English or GED classes – because Martina found it overwhelming to commit to gaining her own education while caring for her children – she was proud that the program motivated her children to find a love of learning and to progress for themselves. She noted that AVANCE taught them how to grow as people, based on the important benefits stemming from education.
3. AVANCE helped Mónica learn the importance of sending her child to school on a full stomach and well groomed. She understood the importance of spending quality time with her child and that learning begins very early in life. She learned appropriate discipline techniques. The program emphasized the value of reading, so she started reading nightly to her child. In addition, she realized the importance of building a positive relationship with her daughter's teacher and to become more involved in school activities. Therefore, she became a volunteer for after school activities and was very involved in her child's education.
4. At AVANCE, Norma learned the valued benefits of the program, which included discussing goals, making crafts for and with her children, learning how being patient, improving communication and having the opportunity for her children to socialize with others. She realized that parents were not born with the required knowledge. At AVANCE was where she learned that knowledge and where her children progressed in their learning. Norma finished high school in Mexico and was an accountant for a private firm. When she arrived to the United States, she had low self-esteem and had difficulty meeting people or developing meaningful relationships with others. AVANCE helped her believe in herself and encouraged her to always continue learning because that would help her children strive to be better as well. At the time of

Exhibit 58: Mothers Speaking About Support for Dual-Generation Education and Growth

the interview, she was a volunteer in her local school district and was taking English classes and GED courses. She credited AVANCE for her enthusiasm and motivation.

5. AVANCE taught Patricia the importance of interacting with children, reading to them and the value of socialization. Reading every day was critical in building their literacy skills, she learned. As far as her education, Patricia completed her 11th year of schooling in Mexico and went to a technical school to become a secretary. After the AVANCE experience, Patricia volunteered at her children's school for 10 years and held leadership roles in the school's PTA as president and treasurer.
6. AVANCE encouraged the love for reading by teaching Rocío how to use the public library. As a result, Rocío's children became passionate about reading too. She started by reading to them in Spanish. With time, they started reading books together, sometimes in English and sometimes in Spanish. AVANCE motivated Rocío to continue her education. She had attended three years at the University of Mexico before moving to the United States, but she did not finish her degree. With the encouragement of AVANCE, she obtained her GED and studied technology. Rocío's dream was to continue her education at a university in this country.

Houston

1. Hilda's son was enrolled in a Head Start program that she said was different from AVANCE. His initial readiness evaluation score was zero but by the end of his time in AVANCE, his readiness had considerable improvement. Hilda was new to this country and spoke little English. As she became more involved in her son's education, she began reading to him at least 30 minutes a day. Her son's advanced reading abilities earned him a commended score on the state assessment. Hilda continued to be very involved in her children's education. She communicated with their teachers on a weekly basis and attended school functions regularly. Her son completed the fifth grade and earned numerous certificates for his excellent grades and many achievements in reading and mathematics. Watching her children succeed in school encouraged her to complete her GED requirements and go on to study education or counseling. She wants to enter a career that would provide opportunities to help children. Hilda believes that AVANCE helped her gain a new perspective on life. "Dreams can come true, but it is in each of us to decide how much we want to succeed," she concluded.
2. Lorena was looking for a place for her son to attend preschool and quickly discovered a "fortune," the AVANCE program. Learning how to help her children read was her first satisfying encounter as she learned it would influence their love for reading.

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Lorena began to read story books to her children and to ask questions about the stories. At home, she would read to her children two or three times a week. If they liked the book, they would read it over and over. As a result, her children became active readers. Her oldest daughter especially had a passion for reading. Lorena is planning to go to college to pursue her goal to master English and get into the field of child development.

3. María described the AVANCE experience as very educational, a continual learning process. Though she studied in her home country, she said there was no instruction on how to be a parent. For years, she sought out books that could help educate her on raising her children. But it was in AVANCE where she found that knowledge. Consequently, her family made reading a part of their routine. She was able to complete her GED in addition to completing English and computer classes. María plans to continue her education once her daughters are a little older. In the meantime, she is working on mastering her English in preparation for entering college studies.

Austin

1. AVANCE modeled for Josefina the importance of reading to her child's education. The AVANCE team always took books to Josefina's house and read with her children. They would read to and play with her son, always encouraging him to achieve a college education and to become an engineer. She is in college pursuing an engineering degree. When Josefina was in Mexico, she worked as a nurse and had originally hoped to continue in that line of work in the United States. Although she worked as a caretaker, she had not been able to pursue her career in nursing because of her limited English proficiency, which is part of her motivation to learn the language. The English skills Josefina acquired in AVANCE helped in her current work, and she hopes that one day this will facilitate achieving her dream of becoming a nurse.
2. AVANCE showed María the positive impacts that reading has on children. She started taking her child to the library to find and read English books. María did not complete high school and has been unable to further her education because she had to work two jobs. Nevertheless, she had not lost sight of the importance of education as this was consistently reinforced by AVANCE. She was planning to move forward by enrolling in classes to learn English and to eventually obtain her GED.
3. Through her participation in AVANCE, Nancy learned the importance of reading to her children and committed to do so regularly. She noted this activity provided a positive impact on their reading skills. AVANCE instilled in her the importance of life-long learning. Nancy had been unable to further her own education and complete

Exhibit 58: Mothers Speaking About Support for Dual-Generation Education and Growth

high school, but had set the goal to advance by enrolling in classes to learn English as a first step, followed by obtaining her GED. Eventually, Nancy wants to return to school for massage therapy and continue her education by studying child development and child psychology, after her children graduate from high school and go on to college.

4. AVANCE helped Linda understand that reading to her child is of utmost importance and that it needs to be done as often as possible. Because of this, Linda tried to read to her daughter at least once a day, even though at times it was difficult. Through the participation at AVANCE, Linda believes that being involved in her children's education was vital to their success. For this reason, she began to meet with the teachers at least once a week to check on their progress and as a partner continued to support their learning at home. Linda already had her GED at the time she enrolled in the program but took advantage of attending the English classes they offered. AVANCE classes and guest speakers helped build Linda's self-efficacy. AVANCE motivated Linda to advance her education and she plans to seek a master's degree in sociology to help other families in the community.

El Paso

1. Beatriz learned the importance of going to the library with her children and realized the importance of learning at AVANCE. She hopes to eventually have a professional degree.
2. María participated in a variety of activities and classes at AVANCE. There, she learned about the importance of reading to her children and made a practice of reading to them at home. AVANCE staff would visit her house to observe and provide guidance for helping her children and even assessing them at home. María did not complete high school but aspired to get her GED and, more than anything else, she wants to master English. María developed a strong work ethic, including exerting effort to learn to do something well, having confidence in learning, taking turns and sharing responsibilities when working with a group of adults, and remembering that all tasks were important. María also began to volunteer as a way of giving back to the community.

Focus Area 3: Employment and Income Levels

Findings:

1. At the time of their graduation from AVANCE, more mothers were employed (29.5 percent) than when they entered AVANCE (17.1 percent). The employment quality was also higher – 17.6 percent of the mothers’ employment was full time after leaving AVANCE, compared to 6.2 percent at the time of seeking its services.
2. The general trend toward employment improvement continued long after mothers left AVANCE. At the time of the interviews, the employed proportion had increased to 38.8 percent (compared to 29.5 percent when they graduated from AVANCE) – of these, 23.8 percent were full time (compared to 17.6 percent when they graduated from AVANCE).
3. The general income distribution did not change from the time of enrollment to the time of the interviews because most of the improvement happened at the lowest levels of the salary scale, that is, to the families that needed it the most. In other words, most families continued to be at the lowest income levels, but more families were employed earning some salary.
4. Mothers were very appreciative of the skills they gained in AVANCE that helped them find employment. These skills included improved self-esteem and self-confidence, better communication, and improved ability to work with others – all highly valued skills in the workplace.

An improvement in their economic situation is a clear indication of people’s progress in society. In part, the emphasis on education is the expectation that a better education will lead to better employment opportunities, with their corresponding improvement in income levels. Therefore, *Employment and Income Levels*, the third focus area of the AVANCE PCEP evaluation, is another important analytical focus in which a substantial number of variables were involved. This section starts with an analysis of participants’ employment status before and after their participation in AVANCE. Second, their actual income levels are compared over time. The section ends with the participants’ opinions about the effects the AVANCE experience had on their employment and economic situation.

Employment Status Before and After AVANCE

As shown in Exhibit 59, more than 80 percent (80.3 percent) of the mothers who sought AVANCE support were unemployed before they contacted AVANCE, and 17.1 percent were employed, with the majority working part time. Five mothers (2.6 percent) were self-employed.

Exhibit 59: Before entering AVANCE, what was your employment status?												
Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 91)		(N = 48)		(N = 25)		(N = 20)		(N = 9)		(N = 193)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Unemployed	83	91.2	36	75.0	15	60.0	13	65.0	8	88.9	155	80.3
Self-employed	1	1.1	3	6.3	1	4.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	2.6
Employed Part Time	4	4.4	7	14.6	6	24.0	4	20.0	0	0.0	21	10.9
Employed Full Time	3	3.3	2	4.2	3	12.0	3	15.0	1	11.1	12	6.2

Exhibit 60 shows the employment situation immediately after the mothers exited AVANCE. Fewer than 70 percent (68.9 percent) of the mothers were unemployed immediately after they exited AVANCE. Nearly 30 percent (29.5 percent) were employed, and of those, the majority had a full-time job. Three mothers were self-employed. This represented a general improvement in the mother's employment situation upon completing the AVANCE PCEP.

Exhibit 60: Immediately after exiting AVANCE, what was your employment status?												
Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 91)		(N = 48)		(N = 25)		(N = 20)		(N = 9)		(N = 193)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Unemployed	69	75.8	36	75.0	12	48.0	9	45.0	7	77.8	133	68.9
Self-employed	2	2.2	1	2.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	1.6
Employed Part Time	5	5.5	5	10.4	6	24.0	6	30.0	1	11.1	23	11.9
Employed Full Time	15	16.5	6	12.5	7	28.0	5	25.0	1	11.1	34	17.6

A comparative analysis of the participants' employment status before and after their participation in AVANCE is presented in Exhibit 61.

Exhibit 61: Mother’s Employment Status – Before/After Comparative Analysis (N = 193)

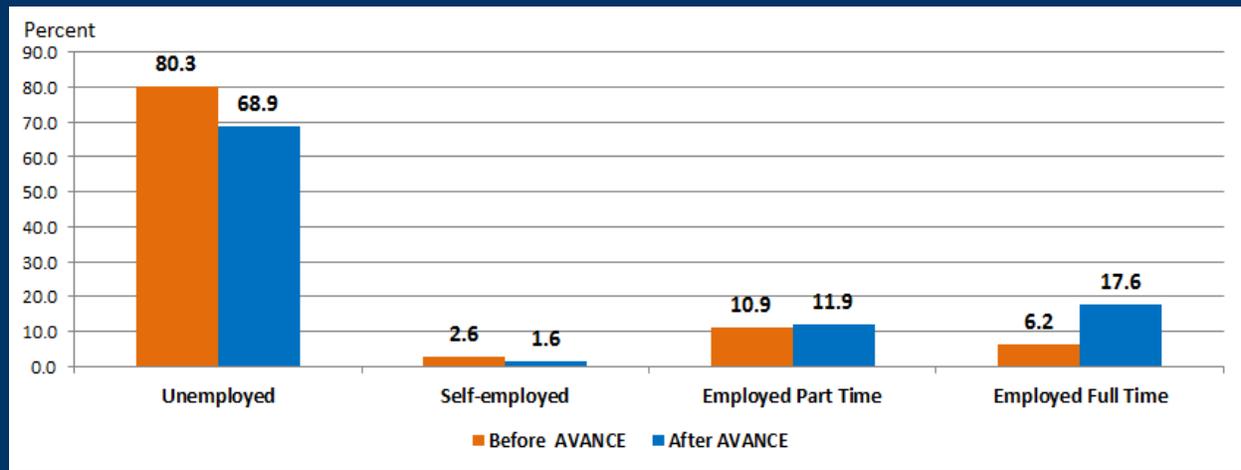
Employment Status	Before AVANCE		After AVANCE		Difference*	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Unemployed	155	80.3	133	68.9	-22	-14.2%
Self-employed	5	2.6	3	1.6	-2	-40.0%
Employed Part Time	21	10.9	23	11.9	2	9.5%
Employed Full Time	12	6.2	34	17.6	22	183.3%

* Chi-square test of significance: $X^2 = 12.8, p < 0.01$

The analysis shows a statistically significant difference between the participants’ employment status prior to their participation in AVANCE and immediately after exiting AVANCE ($p < 0.01$). A chi-square test was required because the variable *Employment Status* has an ordinal data level of measurement. In addition, this variable is not normally distributed for this population. It is highly skewed, with most subjects grouped under the *Unemployed* category. Therefore, a non-parametric test, such as the chi square, was required. The exhibit shows that the number of mothers who obtained full-time employment more than doubled, from 12 to 34 mothers working full time, before and after AVANCE participation, respectively, for an increase of 183.3 percent.

Exhibit 62 compares graphically the participants’ employment status before and after their participation in AVANCE. The values were taken from the third and fifth columns of the exhibit above. It shows a clear trend toward reduced unemployment and increased employment, particularly full time, after their participation in AVANCE.

Exhibit 62: Mother’s Employment Status – Percentage Comparison (N = 193)



This trend continued from the time the mothers left AVANCE to the time they were interviewed. Exhibit 63 shows the participants’ employment status at the time of the interview. It shows that the unemployment proportion had decreased to 56.5 percent at the time of the interviews, from 68.9 percent when mothers left AVANCE. The employed proportion almost reached 40 percent (38.8 percent), and the majority of the jobs (23.8 percent) were full time, compared to 29.5 percent and 17.6 percent, respectively, when mothers had just left AVANCE. In total, there was a 127 percent increase (33 to 75) in the number of mothers who were employed from the time they started in the AVANCE program to the time of the interviews (Exhibit 59 and Exhibit 63). The number of mothers who were self-employed also increased to nine from five (80.0 percent).

Exhibit 63: What is your current employment status?

Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 91)		(N = 48)		(N = 25)		(N = 20)		(N = 9)		(N = 193)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Unemployed	54	59.3	29	60.4	16	64.0	6	30.0	4	44.4	109	56.5
Self-employed	3	3.3	4	8.3	0	0.0	1	5.0	1	11.1	9	4.7
Employed Part Time	8	8.8	8	16.7	4	16.0	7	35.0	2	22.2	29	15.0
Employed Full Time	26	28.6	7	14.6	5	20.0	6	30.0	2	22.2	46	23.8

A second chi-square test was performed contrasting the employment situation between the times when the mothers graduated from AVANCE to when they were interviewed. The analysis, in Exhibit 64, shows a statistically significant improvement in the mothers’ employment level. It

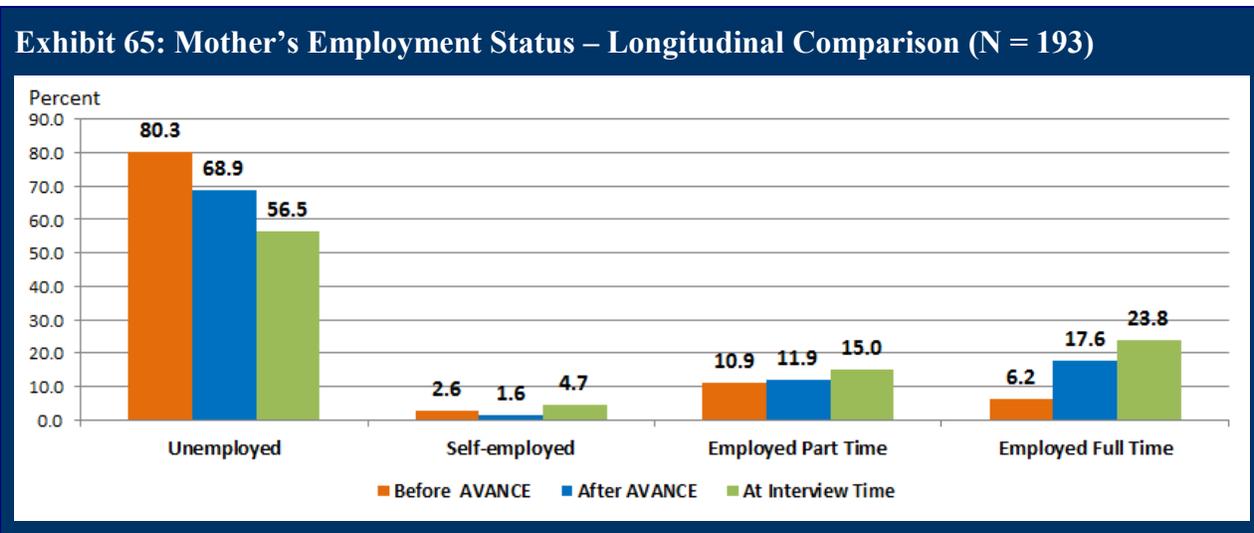
shows that the number of unemployed mothers decreased by 18 percent, and the number employed increased by 61.4 percent, most of which were full time (35.3 percent improvement). These differences were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). An interesting figure is the increase in the number of mothers self-employed, from three to nine, or 200 percent. This shows an important degree of entrepreneurship, which will be discussed further in the next focus area.

Exhibit 64: Mother’s Employment Status – Longitudinal Comparative Analysis (N = 193)

Employment Status	After AVANCE		At Interview Time		Difference*	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Unemployed	133	68.9	109	56.5	-24	-18.0%
Self-employed	3	1.6	9	4.7	6	200.0%
Employed Part Time	23	11.9	29	15.0	6	26.1%
Employed Full Time	34	17.6	46	23.8	12	35.3%

* Chi-square test of significance: $X^2 = 7.87, p < 0.05$

Exhibit 65 presents a longitudinal comparison of the mothers’ employment status from before their participation in AVANCE, immediately after exiting it, to the time of the interviews – about a 10-year span. It summarizes the various analyses in this sub-section and shows a general and sustained improvement in the mothers’ employment situation during the period of time covered by this evaluation.



Participants' Income Levels before and after AVANCE

Did this general employment improvement have an effect on those families' income levels? The purpose of this sub-section is to answer that question. Exhibit 66 reproduces the information presented in Exhibit 15 in a different format – one that allows examining the percentages by city. It shows the largest group of mothers (37.9) in the income scale presented earned less than \$20,000 when they enrolled in AVANCE. The second largest group (20.7 percent) earned between \$30,000 and \$39,999. The third largest group (18.6 percent) earned between \$20,000 and \$29,999.

Exhibit 66: Participant Annual Income Levels Upon Enrolling in AVANCE												
Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 65)		(N = 34)		(N = 20)		(N = 13)		(N = 8)		(N = 140)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Under \$20,000	35	53.8	8	23.5	6	30.0	2	15.4	2	25.0	53	37.9
\$20,000- \$29,999	15	23.1	4	11.8	1	5.0	2	15.4	4	50.0	26	18.6
\$30,000- \$39,999	10	15.4	10	29.4	5	25.0	3	23.1	1	12.5	29	20.7
\$40,000- \$49,999	3	4.6	8	23.5	3	15.0	1	7.7	0	0.0	15	10.7
\$50,000- \$59,999	1	1.5	1	2.9	1	5.0	0	0.0	1	12.5	4	2.9
\$60,000- \$74,999	1	1.5	2	5.9	1	5.0	2	15.4	0	0.0	6	4.3
\$75,000- \$149,999	0	0.0	1	2.9	2	10.0	2	15.4	0	0.0	5	3.6
\$150,000 +	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	5.0	1	7.7	0	0.0	2	1.4

Exhibit 67 shows the same information at the time of the interviews. The exhibit suggests that the distribution in the mothers' income levels did not change from the time they were in AVANCE. It shows that the largest group of mothers (40.7 percent) earned less than \$20,000. The next largest percentage (21.4 percent) group was in the \$30,000 to \$39,999 as before, followed by 20.7 percent who earned between \$20,000 and \$29,999. This analysis implies that the newly employed mothers were earning about the same low wages as those who had jobs before.

Exhibit 67: Participant Annual Income Levels Upon Enrolling in AVANCE

Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 62)		(N = 35)		(N = 22)		(N = 14)		(N = 7)		(N = 140)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Under \$20,000	27	43.5	13	37.1	10	45.5	4	28.6	3	42.9	57	40.7
\$20,000- \$29,999	12	19.4	8	22.9	3	13.6	3	21.4	3	42.9	29	20.7
\$30,000- \$39,999	12	19.4	7	20.0	5	22.7	5	35.7	1	14.3	30	21.4
\$40,000- \$49,999	3	4.8	4	11.4	2	9.1	2	14.3	0	0.0	11	7.9
\$50,000- \$59,999	1	1.6	2	5.7	1	4.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	2.9
\$60,000- \$74,999	3	4.8	1	2.9	1	4.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	3.6
\$75,000- \$149,999	4	6.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	2.9
\$150,000 +	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

This sub-section began with the question, “Did this general employment improvement have an effect on those families’ income levels?” The answer to this question is yes and no. In most groups, as more individuals are added to the workforce (improving the employment rate), the lower the average salary for that group gets. This happens because most jobs would naturally correspond to the lower end of the pay scale due to the pyramidal structure of most institutions, organizations and companies. In other words, the high paying jobs are few; the low paying jobs are many. So as more people are employed, the average salary of most groups will naturally decrease since there would be more people in low paying positions than before. In the AVANCE family case, this is even more acute because, despite of their gains in education, as a group these mothers still have very low educational attainment. Therefore, the result we obtained is what one would expect.

On the bright side, most families did improve their income level, and this improvement happened to the families who most needed them. Mothers were very appreciative of the skills they gained in AVANCE that helped them find employment, as shown in vignettes (shown in Exhibit 68), which represents a synthesis of what the 24 participants in the face-to-face interviews expressed regarding the support for employment and income level provided by AVANCE. These skills included improved self-esteem and self-confidence, better communication skills, and improved ability to work with others, as part of teams – all highly valued skills in today’s institutions, organizations and companies.

Exhibit 68: Mothers on Employment and Income Levels

San Antonio

1. Alma's experience at AVANCE was instrumental in her achieving her dream of becoming a science teacher. She is a seventh grade science teacher.
2. Claudia's family started a flooring business where Claudia and her husband have partnered to divide their responsibilities so that there would be a balance of handling the many tasks necessary to build and maintain a business. This was a major achievement. Claudia credited AVANCE for her family success.
3. Cynthia is employed with the City of San Antonio's Health Department of Epidemiology. Working with the city brightened her horizons regarding careers, and she plans to broaden her opportunities to grow professionally.
4. Diane credited AVANCE for helping her acquire job skills through the Untapped Potential program. This program helped prepare her for the part-time job she has had for six and a half months with the San Antonio Housing Authority.
5. Elizabeth spent nine months in AVANCE and is working for AVANCE as a coordinator of its Home-Based Services for Early Head Start.
6. Erika is a full-time mom, and her husband is the breadwinner of the family. She supports her family income by extending the value of each dollar made. The family opened a savings account and saves for emergencies and for their children's college education.
7. Irene focused on learning English to renew her Certified Nursing Assistance (CNA) license, which, at the time of the interview, she had just completed and started to search for a job in that area.
8. Mónica had a full-time job when she joined AVANCE. However, the motivation she received from AVANCE and the other parents in the program lifted her confidence, which made her feel capable of accepting new challenges. As a result, she was nominated to be the president within her department working group.
9. Before participating in AVANCE, Sandra was unemployed. She represents one of the examples of mothers who, after completing the program, continued at AVANCE as an employee. Sandra said she is always happy to help others advance like she has.

Dallas

1. María is a housewife and does not work outside her home.
2. Martina is a housewife and does not work outside her home.
3. Mónica is self-employed. She credits AVANCE for learning how to manage her money. Saving money became a habit for her, and she guides her daughter to do the same. Her daughter opened a savings account and obtained a debit card on her advice.

Exhibit 68: Mothers on Employment and Income Levels

4. Norma does not work outside of her home.
5. Patricia's experience with AVANCE was so impactful that she started working with them and believes whole-heartedly in the program. Working for the last seven years at AVANCE has enabled her to continue her education so that one day she can become a teacher.
6. Rocío did not disclose her employment situation but stated that the program improved her banking skills.

Houston

1. Hilda began working as a secretary in a mechanic's shop and found herself having to translate for her employer who did not speak English. She was proud to be able to assist her boss through the skills she had learned through AVANCE. Hilda believed this responsibility gave her the confidence of knowing that she was providing a service he could not do. She felt that learning English through AVANCE helped her not only in her job, but in life.
2. Lorena did not work before she participated in AVANCE. With AVANCE's encouragement, she began working full time.
3. María was employed prior to leaving Mexico. Since her husband owned his own business, she started helping him.

Austin

1. AVANCE and its English class allowed Josefina to obtain work as a caregiver. AVANCE was also the driving force behind the decision that she and her husband made to start their own businesses.
2. María had a full-time position before and after her participation in AVANCE. At the time of the interview, she was still working full time.
3. Nancy had a full-time position before and immediately after her participation in AVANCE.
4. Linda had a full-time position before and after her participation in AVANCE, and she continued at that job as a salesperson at the time of the interview.

El Paso

1. Beatriz's family owned a marble and other natural stones business during the time she was participating in AVANCE. She and her husband received couple's support from AVANCE which she thought helped them both work together in the family business.
2. María's husband was the family provider through his small business. Not needing to work, María became a certified volunteer. What she learned at AVANCE helped her in her volunteer role enormously, she said. She developed a strong work ethic.

Focus Area 4: Homeownership and Entrepreneurship

Findings:

1. The data showed a clear trend toward increased homeownership and reduced renting and other arrangements from the time the mothers were at AVANCE to the present. Before leaving AVANCE, 66.7 percent of the mothers rented their home, and 11.5 percent had other arrangements. At the time of the interviews, these proportions decreased to 42.2 percent and 4.7 percent, respectively. Homeownership, on the other hand, increased from 21.9 percent before mothers graduated from AVANCE to 53.1 percent at the time of the interviews.
2. The homeownership improvement trend was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). The number of families who rented homes decreased by 36.7 percent, the number of families who made other living arrangements also decreased substantially by 59.1 percent, and the number of families who owned their own homes more than doubled with an increase of 142.9 percent.
3. At the time of the interviews, two-thirds of mothers (66.1 percent) did not have health insurance; only one-third (33.9 percent) had health insurance. The percentage of AVANCE participants who had health insurance (about one third) remained remarkably similar regardless of their level of homeownership.
4. About 17.8 percent of mothers became entrepreneurs, and 14.1 percent still have their businesses today.
5. More than half of the mothers (53.7 percent) were involved in their community since graduating from AVANCE. Mothers attributed AVANCE for helping them become leaders in their communities and for their increased involvement in their children's schools and other community institutions, such as the church.
6. Mothers have been involved in the community in a variety of ways: 46.3 percent have been involved with their children's school; 20 percent with their local church; 10.5 percent continued to be involved with their local AVANCE chapters; 7.4 percent have been involved with their communities by informally interacting with their neighbors; and a few were involved with their local libraries, nursing homes, or through United Way or the HIPPIY program.
7. Mothers thanked AVANCE for the skills they learned that improved their

homeownership and entrepreneurship status. Some of those skills included managing their finances, improved self-concept, and improved communication skills that aided their participation with their community to the point that some mothers became public speakers.

One aspect of improvement in living conditions is to own the dwelling where one lives. This has long been considered an integral part of the American Dream. An extension of that concept is to expand that sense of ownership beyond the home, to include entrepreneurial endeavors either by creating business or through the purchase of stocks of publicly traded companies, and other items with economic value, such as bonds, rental properties, acreage or livestock. This section of the evaluation report examines the degree to which AVANCE mothers owned any of those items and what influence, if any, their AVANCE experience had on their decisions in this regard. The first part of this section studies AVANCE family homeownership. Here the issue of having health insurance is also covered. The second part expands this sense of ownership to cover the family’s entrepreneurship. The section ends with the participants’ opinions about the effects their AVANCE experience had on their homeownership and entrepreneurship.

AVANCE Family Homeownership

Exhibit 69 shows the number of AVANCE families who owned their homes or had other arrangements at the time the mothers were participating in AVANCE. Most families (66.7 percent) rented their dwelling, and 21.9 percent owned them. The remaining 11.5 percent had some other arrangements, which for the most part involved living with some relatives. At that time, the highest proportion of homeownership was in El Paso, where 55.6 percent of the families owned their homes. The least was in Austin, where only one family owned their home.

Exhibit 69: Regarding the place where you lived before leaving AVANCE, did you own, rent or had other arrangements?												
Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 91)		(N = 47)		(N = 25)		(N = 20)		(N = 9)		(N = 192)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Rented Home	63	69.2	29	61.7	18	72.0	14	70.0	4	44.4	128	66.7
Owned Home	13	14.3	16	34.0	7	28.0	1	5.0	5	55.6	42	21.9
Had Other Arrangement	15	16.5	2	4.3	0	0.0	5	25.0	0	0.0	22	11.5

Exhibit 70 shows the number of AVANCE families who owned their homes or had other arrangements at the time the mothers were interviewed. Most families (53.1 percent) owned their dwellings, 42.2 percent rented them, and only 4.7 percent had some other arrangement. This general improvement in homeownership happened across all the cities in the study. San Antonio increased from 14.3 percent to 53.8 percent; Dallas increased from 34.0 percent to 55.3 percent; Houston increased from 28.0 percent to 56.0 percent; Austin increased from 5.0 percent to 35.0 percent; and El Paso, which continued with the highest proportion of homeownership, increased from 55.6 percent to 66.7 percent.

Exhibit 70: Regarding the place where you currently live, do you own, rent or have other arrangements?

Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 91)		(N = 47)		(N = 25)		(N = 20)		(N = 9)		(N = 192)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Rented Home	34	37.4	20	42.6	11	44.0	13	65.0	3	33.3	81	42.2
Owned Home	49	53.8	26	55.3	14	56.0	7	35.0	6	66.7	102	53.1
Had Other Arrangement	8	8.8	1	2.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	9	4.7

A comparative analysis was performed contrasting the homeownership status between the times when the mothers were participating in AVANCE and when they were interviewed. The analysis, shown in Exhibit 71, shows a statistically significant improvement in the families' homeownership level. It shows that the number of families who rented homes decreased from 128 to 81, a 36.7 percent decline. Families who made other arrangements also decreased substantially, from 22 to 9, a 59.1 percent decline. The net winner was the number of families who owned their own homes, which more than doubled, from 42 to 102, for an increase of 142.9 percent. This shows an important degree of homeownership. This improvement in homeownership status was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). A chi-square test was required because the variable *Homeownership Status* has nominal data level of measurement. Therefore, only non-parametric statistics could be applied.

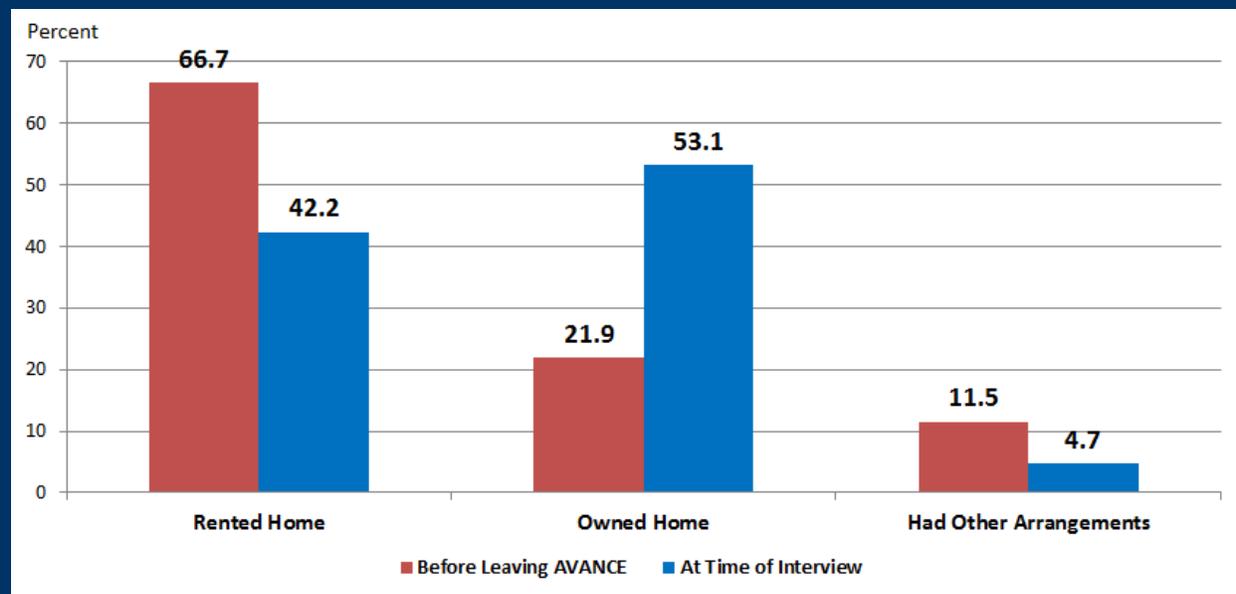
Exhibit 71: AVANCE Family Homeownership – Longitudinal Analysis (N = 192)

Homeownership Status	Before Leaving AVANCE		At Time of Interview		Difference*	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Rented Home	128	66.7	81	42.2	-47	-36.7%
Owned Home	42	21.9	102	53.1	60	142.9%
Had Other Arrangements	22	11.5	9	4.7	-13	-59.1%

* Chi-square test of significance: $X^2 = 44.40, p < 0.01$

Exhibit 72 compares graphically the families’ homeownership status before graduating from AVANCE and at the time of the interviews. The values were taken from the third and fifth columns of Exhibit 71, respectively. It shows a clear trend toward reduced renting and other arrangements and increased homeownership from the time the mothers were at AVANCE to the present. Before leaving AVANCE, 66.7 percent of the mothers rented their home, and 11.5 percent had other arrangements. At the time of the interviews, these proportions decreased to 42.2 percent and 4.7 percent, respectively. Homeownership, on the other hand, increased from 21.9 percent before mothers graduated from AVANCE to 53.1 percent at the time of the interviews.

Exhibit 72: Mother’s homeownership Status – Percentage Comparison (N = 193)



Another important socio-economic indicator is whether a family has health insurance or not. Participants were asked about this, and Exhibit 73 shows their answers. Two-thirds of the mothers (66.1 percent) did not have health insurance. This varied from city to city. For example, in San Antonio more than 40 percent (40.1 percent) of the mothers had health insurance, but in El Paso only one mother out of nine (11.1 percent) had health insurance.

Exhibit 73: Do you have health insurance?												
	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
Answer	(N = 91)		(N = 47)		(N = 25)		(N = 20)		(N = 9)		(N = 192)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	37	40.7	9	19.1	7	28.0	11	55.0	1	11.1	65	33.9
No	54	59.3	38	80.9	18	72.0	9	45.0	8	88.9	127	66.1

To investigate whether homeownership had any effect on having health insurance, a cross tabulation between these two variables was performed. Exhibit 74 shows the resulting analysis. It shows that there was no effect between these two variables. The percentage of AVANCE participants who had health insurance remained remarkably similar regardless of their level of homeownership, from 33.3 percent to 34.6 percent (Exhibit 74).

Exhibit 74: Homeownership by Health Insurance						
	Health insurance					
	Yes		No		Total	
Homeownership	N	%	N	%	N	%
Rent	28	34.6	53	65.4	81	100.0
Own	34	33.3	68	66.7	102	100.0
Had Other Arrangements	3	33.3	6	66.7	9	100.0
Total	65	33.9	127	66.1	192	100.0

AVANCE Family Entrepreneurship

The most traditional way of expressing entrepreneurship is through the ownership of one's company or organization. AVANCE participants were asked whether they ever started their own businesses. Exhibit 75 shows their responses. Many mothers (17.8 percent) have at some point started their own business. This happened throughout the five cities in the study. In El Paso,

about half of the nine participants had started their own business, and in Austin about a third of the participants had started their own business.

Exhibit 75: Have you ever started a business?												
	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
Answer	(N = 91)		(N = 47)		(N = 24)		(N = 20)		(N = 9)		(N = 191)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	9	9.9	9	19.1	6	25.0	6	30.0	4	44.4	34	17.8
No	82	90.1	38	80.9	18	75.0	14	70.0	5	55.6	157	82.2

The mothers also were asked whether they had their own business at the time of the interviews. Exhibit 76 shows their responses. Many mothers (14.1 percent) still own their own business. San Antonio and Dallas were the cities in which mothers who started their business have kept them at the highest rate, nine out of nine in San Antonio, and eight out of nine in Dallas.

Exhibit 76: Do you own a business now?												
	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
Answer	(N = 91)		(N = 47)		(N = 24)		(N = 20)		(N = 9)		(N = 191)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	9	9.9	8	17.0	3	12.5	5	25.0	2	22.2	27	14.1
No	82	90.1	39	83.0	21	87.5	15	75.0	7	77.8	164	85.9

Entrepreneurship can be expressed in many other ways. AVANCE participants were asked whether they owned a variety of valuable items often associated with entrepreneurship. Exhibit 77 shows their responses. Few mothers owned these items. Four mothers in San Antonio and one in Dallas owned stocks. One mother in San Antonio owned bonds. Three mothers in San Antonio and three in Houston owned rental properties. Two mothers in San Antonio had some acreage. Two mothers in San Antonio and one in Houston owned livestock.

Exhibit 77: Number and Percentage of Mothers Who Owned these Valuables												
Valuables	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 91)		(N = 47)		(N = 24)		(N = 20)		(N = 9)		(N = 191)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Stocks	4	4.4	1	2.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	2.6
Bonds	1	1.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.5
Rental Properties	3	3.3	0	0.0	3	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	3.1
Acreage	2	2.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	1.0
Livestock	2	2.2	0	0.0	1	4.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	1.6

Another level of entrepreneurship is through participation in the community. Mothers were asked whether they were involved in their communities, since graduating from AVANCE. Exhibit 78 shows their responses. More than half of the mothers (53.7 percent) were involved in their community since leaving AVANCE. This involvement was manifested throughout the five cities in the study, from San Antonio, with 38.5 percent, to El Paso, with 75.0 percent of mothers participating.

Exhibit 78: Since leaving AVANCE, have you been involved with your community?												
Answer	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
	(N = 78)		(N = 47)		(N = 24)		(N = 20)		(N = 8)		(N = 177)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	30	38.5	32	68.1	16	66.7	11	55.0	6	75.0	95	53.7
No	48	61.5	15	31.9	8	33.3	9	45.0	2	25.0	82	46.3

Community involvement happened in a variety of ways. Exhibit 79 lists different organizations with which the mothers have been involved. At the top is the school district or school of their children, with 46.3 percent of the mothers involved with their children’s school at some level. Some volunteered in school activities; others actively participated in the school PTA; and others did fundraising and other general activities. The second most-named organization was their local church, with 20 percent of the mothers expressing their community involvement at church. In addition, many mothers (10.5 percent) indicated that they continued to be involved with their local AVANCE chapters, from distributing pamphlets to helping with transportation when there were events, to sharing their experiences with others. Some mothers (7.4 percent) indicated that

they were involved in their communities by informally interacting with their neighbors and helping them in various ways. Mothers also volunteered at their local libraries, in nursing homes, and through United Way or the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) program.

Exhibit 79: Mothers' Community Involvement		
Type of Involvement	Total	%
School district, children's school, PTA	44	46.3
Church activities	19	20.0
AVANCE – distributing pamphlets, sharing the knowledge, transportation	10	10.5
Informal interacting with neighbors and assisting others	7	7.4
Community center/residence council	4	4.2
Library – helping children	3	3.2
Nursing homes	3	3.2
United Way	2	2.1
Health awareness clinics	1	1.1
HIPPY program	1	1.1
Public engagement - speaker	1	1.1
Total	95	100.0

Mothers attributed AVANCE for helping them become leaders in their communities and for their increased involvement in their children's school and other community institutions, such as church. They also thanked AVANCE for skills they learned that improved their homeownership and entrepreneurship status. Some of those skills included managing their finances, improved self-concept and improved communication that aided their participation with community including some mothers becoming public speakers. All of this is shown in the following vignettes (Exhibit 80), which represent a synthesis of what the 24 participants in the face-to-face interviews expressed regarding the support for homeownership and entrepreneurship provided by AVANCE.

Exhibit 80: Mothers on Homeownership and Entrepreneurship

San Antonio

1. Alma learned about the importance of financial literacy through AVANCE. Alma is now a professional who knows first-hand the importance of education, buying a home, opening a checking account, and saving for college. Knowing this, she already has set a college fund for her oldest child. According to Alma, before participating in the program she had a low self-esteem and did not know how to dress properly and present herself in a professional way. Her participation in the program enabled her to see herself as a leader in her children's school and community and see herself as a woman who can achieve. Alma is currently starting a community action project that targets Spanish-speaking parents and their children in high school to ensure they gain knowledge on financial aid procedures for college.
2. Claudia's family started a flooring business where Claudia and her husband have partnered to divide the various responsibilities. They established a balanced way of handling the many tasks necessary to build and maintain the business. This was a major goal achievement that Claudia credits AVANCE for her family success.
3. Cynthia was very involved with her community through her church. She was also involved in environmental protection issues. She signed a petition for a cause regarding keeping local bat caves intact. Her aunt, a natural environmentalist, motivated her to sign the petition and to use Texas native gardening. She also tried to grow flowers to help keep monarch butterflies from migrating, since they are disappearing.
4. Diane would like to own a sales business someday. AVANCE helped improve her communication skills that continued to help her in her role as a member of her neighborhood resident council. The program helped her become an important member of her community. She credited AVANCE with helping her keep her children out of trouble, teaching them new skills and "how to get out of poverty level and stop living under government assistance."
5. Elizabeth believed that her participation in AVANCE led her to invest in education for herself and her children as this was the legacy she would leave. She had no monetary investments but believed that her children going to college was the best asset for their future security. Because of her positive experiences with AVANCE, Elizabeth encouraged family and community members to participate in the parenting program. When she shared her positive experiences with them, her enthusiasm was contagious.
6. A major impact for Erika was the opportunity to meet and make friends who provided a circle of support for herself and her family.
7. Irene indicated that everything about AVANCE was very useful. Through the classes, her self-esteem and self-confidence increased, and she became more patient with her children. Irene also was able to build friendships with her neighbors.
8. Mónica and her spouse owned two trailer homes. One was used as their residence, and they leased the other to tenants. In addition to this investment, Mónica used her

Exhibit 80: Mothers on Homeownership and Entrepreneurship

entrepreneurial skills to run a seasonal baking side-business. She instilled the entrepreneurship skills in her children as they, too, helped with baking and with selling popcorn and cotton-candy in the neighborhood. AVANCE financial classes helped Mónica manage her money better, and she hoped that one day she would own a restaurant. The program helped build her self-esteem and self-confidence. Her social skills grew, and she became a better parent. Mónica thanked AVANCE for providing her with resources she was not aware of and for the parenting and financial skills she gained from the program.

9. Sandra's life was positively transformed by her participation in AVANCE. She shared that after acquiring many skills and knowledge at AVANCE, her family no longer had to rely on government assistance programs. They acquired a car, a house and insurance for their children. Sandra credited the program for her resiliency and strengths in perseverance by not focusing on the barriers but instead focusing on accomplishing her vision.

Dallas

1. María stated that her children who attended AVANCE were more prepared, motivated and confident when they entered school than her children who did not participate in the program. AVANCE prepared María to participate in the school and continued schoolwork with her children at home through learning games.
2. Martina said the program helped her family with social skills, increasing the contact with others outside their nuclear family.
3. The program helped Mónica overcome her shyness and her outlook on life. AVANCE made such an impact in Mónica's life that she believed: "The participants should promote the program by spreading the word to others on how AVANCE makes a difference in their lives." And that was how she volunteered, spreading the word.
4. Norma and her husband started their own business after their self-confidence improved through the AVANCE program. Their business consists of buying homes and renting them out. Norma was essentially the face of the business, often being the communicator with clients. AVANCE was very instrumental in Norma's life, so much so she would have liked for the program to increase their repertoire of activities for continual growth.
5. AVANCE helped Patricia overcome her depression due to the death of her son, and with time she became an active member of her community.
6. After AVANCE, Rocío became more involved in the school community and the PTA. Rocío and other AVANCE mothers were seen as leaders in the community helping others. She stated that what she learned was very useful for herself, her family, relatives and friends.

Exhibit 80: Mothers on Homeownership and Entrepreneurship

Houston

1. Hilda's experience in AVANCE helped her believe that she can do anything she sets her mind to if she does not give up. She owned a small car business, buying and selling vehicles and planned to expand the business beyond the three or four cars she had. Once she learned to speak English through AVANCE, Hilda became more active at her children's school after learning that there were many children that come from Mexico whose parents did not speak English. She realized that she could do something to help them. Hilda believed that without AVANCE, she, her husband and children probably would not still be together as a family.
2. Lorena's sons loved to watch her make tamales and help sell them. Because of AVANCE, she was very committed to her children's education, knew how each of them was doing academically, and was aware of their study habits and attitudes. Through this commitment, she supported her children's entrepreneurial aspirations.
3. María's greatest investment was securing funding to pay for their oldest daughter's college education. María said that in order to be a good parent, you had to continue to grow as a parent, learning through all stages of your children's development. She recalled a drug prevention class being especially powerful and felt that sometimes it was difficult to take advice from peers and neighbors: "When an expert comes to speak, you feel more comfortable accepting the information and are more likely to put it to use."

Austin

1. Josefina and her husband started their own businesses after their self-confidence improved through the AVANCE program. Josefina said that the program has had a large, positive impact on their family.
2. María was grateful to have learned how to help her daughter learn to socialize and not be so attached to her. As a parent, María felt AVANCE helped her by showing her daughter how to be more secure so she could be more independent. This would eventually help them both be more participative in the community.
3. AVANCE helped Nancy be a better parent. The program provided information, assistance and opportunities to do activities with her child. Nancy and her child have increased their involvement in community activities.
4. AVANCE also helped Linda be a better parent. The program provided parenting classes, field trips, home visits, child development classes and other opportunities to engage in activities with her child. Through the program, they discovered community activities they could participate in.

El Paso

1. Beatriz and her family owned their home. Through AVANCE, Beatriz not only learned about child development and parenting, but also discovered herself, her

Exhibit 80: Mothers on Homeownership and Entrepreneurship

feelings and her ability to relate to others along with how to use her communication skills to build a stable and loving family environment. She and her husband received couple's support from AVANCE, which helped them work together in the family business. Beatriz demonstrated much appreciation for the field trips to the library because she realized how much she valued learning and laments not having the time to learn even more. Beatriz responded positively when asked if she was involved helping others. She believed in always doing what she could for others, at least the ones in close proximity beyond family members.

2. María and her family own their home. María's husband worked and was the family provider, as he owned a business. This provided time for María to volunteer in her community. AVANCE taught her that when she did not know how to do something, she should just learn it, rather than withdraw. This was a powerful lesson for her. It gave her confidence: "I learned to interact, to have friendships; it was very beautiful and... I won't forget it."

Focus Area 5: Barriers, Lasting Effects and Suggestions for Improvement

Findings:

1. Fewer than one third (29.0 percent) of the mothers indicated that AVANCE could have helped them better. In other words, most mothers (more than 70.0 percent) felt that AVANCE had done everything they could to help them. Participants in the face-to-face interviews were asked to expand on the barriers to participation, but the barriers they mentioned were dealing with their own personal situations (English proficiency, child care for some of their children, etc.).
2. Nearly 90 percent (88.1 percent) of the mothers indicated that their participation in AVANCE helped them build their self-esteem.
3. When mothers were asked about the impact AVANCE had on their lives, they provided a multi-page list of positive effects. The main idea was that AVANCE had a life-changing impact on most mothers. It educated them with the knowledge they needed to raise their children well and provided skills they needed to improve their lives.
4. Regarding the impact AVANCE had on their children's lives, mothers most frequently stated that the program prepared their children for school academically and socially (45.8 percent). Mothers indicated that AVANCE improved their children's attitude and behavior, that their children learned to be more independent and to communicate effectively with both their peers and adults, that they gained a sense of joy and confidence, and that the children's English improved as did their general development.
5. When mothers were asked about the best thing AVANCE did for them and their families, three concepts permeated their answers: parenting, communication, and family relationships – representing a combined frequency of 60.9 percent in the content analysis. The mothers indicated that AVANCE helped them not only be better parents but also how to communicate with their children and their husbands, which resulted in improved family unity, often saving their families from possible dissolution. Other things mothers mentioned most frequently were supporting the mothers' education and their children's education (18.6 percent), providing basic economic support when they most needed it (5.4 percent), and helping them set and achieve goals for them and their families (4.7 percent).
6. Regarding suggestions for program improvement, participants wanted the program to last

longer or allow participants to repeat it, they wanted more classes and more activities, and they wanted them to be offered more often and in more convenient schedules. This was echoed by the face-to-face interviews; they also wanted more classes, particularly English and GED and that they be held more often and in all the chapter centers.

One of the reasons for conducting this evaluation was to find out the barriers that could be interfering with people participating in the program or limiting its benefits and, even more importantly, what can be done to overcome them. This section of the evaluation report examines this issue. In addition, participants were asked about the lasting effects AVANCE had on their lives and their children’s lives, the best thing AVANCE did for them, and whether AVANCE helped them build their self-esteem. Discrete answers to these questions were obtained through the telephone interviews. In addition, the section ends with the participants’ opinions about these topics, as expressed through the face-to-face interviews.

Barriers Limiting Program Participation

To find out whether there were any barriers limiting their participation, mothers were asked whether AVANCE could have helped them more. Exhibit 81 shows their responses. Less than one third (29 percent) of the mothers answered in the affirmative. El Paso with 50 percent and Houston with 41.7 percent were the two cities with the highest positive responses to this question. San Antonio, with 17.2 percent was the lowest.

Exhibit 81: In your opinion, could AVANCE have helped you better?												
	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
Answer	(N = 87)		(N = 47)		(N = 24)		(N = 20)		(N = 8)		(N = 186)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	15	17.2	17	36.2	10	41.7	8	40.0	4	50.0	54	29.0
No	72	82.8	30	63.8	14	58.3	12	60.0	4	50.0	132	71.0

When participants answered, “Yes,” to this question, they were asked, “How could have AVANCE helped you better?” A list was compiled with their answers (Exhibit 82). It is a long list, but the main idea was that participants wanted the program to last longer or allow participants to repeat it, they wanted more classes and more activities, and they wanted them to be offered more often and in more convenient schedules.

Exhibit 82: How could AVANCE have helped you better?

Answers with minimal editing [repeated comment n times]

A little more positive.
Be more responsible and attend to us more.
Child care for other children.
Classes mas a menudo [Classes more often].
Focus a little more on job skills and resume.
Give us more time for English classes. I would like more time and days to attend.
My daughter was little, and [they did not have] car seats, [or] cribs; we needed more funds.
How to treat the children better, how to know more about them, how to play more with the children and help them with their homework.
If I would have completed the classes it would have benefited me better in my life. [2]
If people could attend more days of the week that would be great. [3]
If I could have gone back to the program rather than only being able to attend only once. [2]
If the classes that are now being offered were available then, I would have attended them. [3]
If the classes were longer or shortened the lectures, allowing more time for students' participation.
If they had evening classes, I would have kept going.
It would have been great if my spouse could have participated in the program also.
It would have been nice if they would have had the program longer and provide more English.
Just had personal problems.
Longer program, more activities and classes. [8]
More GED.
Needed more resources; building was small.
I would have liked to attend more days rather than just one.
I would have liked to continue going to the program and also not wait to go back.
I would increase the participation time. It was too short.
That anyone can participate in their program even if they don't have children because it is a great program to help with GED and other classes offered by AVANCE.
They did not have all the classes that the other centers had.
They were too far to attend from my house.
I would have liked to keep going but the program was only for a year.

AVANCE Lasting Effects on Participants

There were many instances through the interviews in which participants indicated spontaneously that AVANCE helped them with their self-esteem or self-concept. One of the questions in the last part of telephone interview probed the degree that happened. Participants were asked directly whether AVANCE helped them build their self-esteem. Exhibit 83 shows their answers.

Exhibit 83: Did your participation in AVANCE build your self-esteem?												
	San Antonio		Dallas		Houston		Austin		El Paso		Total	
Answer	(N = 78)		(N = 47)		(N = 23)		(N = 20)		(N = 9)		(N = 177)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	59	75.6	45	95.7	23	100.0	20	100.0	9	100.0	156	88.1
No	19	24.4	2	4.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	21	11.9

The analysis showed that 88.1 percent of the mothers indicated that their participation in AVANCE helped them build their self-esteem. In some cities, such as Dallas, Houston and Austin, 100 percent of the participants indicated that AVANCE helped them with their self-esteem.

Mothers also were asked about the impact AVANCE had in their lives. Exhibit 84 lists their answers. The list spans several pages, but it was important to show the diversity of comments and ways of expressing them. However, the main idea was that AVANCE had a life-changing impact on most mothers; it educated them with the knowledge they needed to raise their children and provided some important skills they needed to improve their own lives.

Exhibit 84: What impact did AVANCE have on your life?
Answers with minimal editing [repeated comment n times]
A big impact. [2]
A great impact. [4]
A wonderful impact. [3]
AVANCE fulfilled my life in education and a safely life with my children
AVANCE helped me and my daughter. [2]
Become a better and stronger mother.
Better parent and with my GED. [3]
Changed my life in totality, helped me be a better parent and know the needs of my children.
Counseling and other good classes.

Exhibit 84: What impact did AVANCE have on your life?

Answers with minimal editing [repeated comment n times]

Development of goals; better understanding family goals.
During that time she was depressed and AVANCE helped her and her daughter.
Even though it was for a few months, it help me became a better parent.
Every day I learned; things I did not know. In Mexico things are different and they taught me how to live in the United States.
Excellent! [5]
Family understanding and English.
Gave me lots of advice for my children.
Gave me the opportunity to go back to school.
Great benefit for all the family.
Great experience.
Helped her a lot; she did not know how to be a mother. She was having a hard time being a mother and the program changed her life.
Helped her be a better parent. [15]
Helped her be more independent and helping her children with school activities, homework, and how to spend quality time with them.
Helped her make better choices and be firm.
Helped her out; helped with child care.
Helped her to be stronger, love her son and value life.
Helped her with her personal life. She hated leaving the program.
Helped her with the family having a positive attitude.
Helped me to be more patient with my children.
Helped me with my children, with different situations they had as far as health issues.
Helped my situation; that I can move forward and not stay where I am. Enrichment.
Helped with the children to advance in communication.
How to teach my children to have a better education.
I became more social.
I enjoyed learning English.
I had just gotten here from Mexico, and they helped me to socialize with people.
I learned about parenting skills and hope to cope with them.
I learned communication with my children.
I learned new skills and English.
I liked it because I learned and the children as well.
I liked it, impacted my life to take care of my children.
I loved the parenting classes with our children.
I was going through a hard time in life and they helped me.
It allowed me to see how there are so many programs out there for women, and taught me about

Exhibit 84: What impact did AVANCE have on your life?

Answers with minimal editing [repeated comment n times]

the correct food to eat (healthy choices).

It educated me in my life and toward my children and my lifestyle.

It encouraged me to keep getting educated on anything you can get your hands on.

It had a great impact on my life and encouraged me to take college courses.

It helped her, and it was a distraction to keep her going.

It helped her be a better parent and be more sociable.

It helped her be a better parent, be patient with her children, assist them with school and help give them confidence.

It helped her be a better parent, her character and to see her children's points of view as children for their futures.

It helped her be a better person, and she learned how to prepare her children for school.

It helped her be more patient with her children.

It helped her be more social and had better communication with her family.

It helped her greatly in her life. She thought that her children begin learning only once they enter into school. But she learned they start learning while they are growing in the mothers' belly.

It helped her how to communicate with others and how to help her children with education.

It helped her learn more about children and family.

It helped her raise her children and how she sees things. It was an opportunity to open other doors.

It helped her to be where she is at now because she learned English and she feels surer of herself.

It helped her tremendously to be more courageous and to be more social.

It helped her with English and being a better parent.

It is a program that helped her greatly on how to see life because otherwise she would not have been able to move forward. Gave her the will to continue.

It made a big impact and would like to get back into the program again.

It made a big impact because she did not know how to be a mom and it helped her prepare to be a mom. Showed her how to be more patient with her children because she learned that children have emotions.

It made a great impact. It helped her to understand her children.

It taught me tons of parenting skills and how to survive with what I have.

It taught me to be a better parent.

It was a favorable impact.

It was a good program.

It was a very positive program; taught me how to raise my children.

It was a way for me to continue my education as a mother.

It was an opportunity to open other doors.

It was great because they have helped a lot and I applied it to my life to have a better life and be a better mother.

It was something great for her and her son. It helped her go back to school and finish.

Exhibit 84: What impact did AVANCE have on your life?

Answers with minimal editing [repeated comment n times]

Learned how to communicate better with my children.

Lots of impact, it helped me with my life.

Lots, it helped me very much.

Meet woman who were going through what I was going. Lots of support.

Motivation for better life. [3]

My life totally changed, because my children are always honor roll. I have no problems with them.

Positive impact because it helped her improve her character.

Positive influence in my life.

Positive. I would have never gone to college if it was not for AVANCE.

She enjoyed the program.

She learned a lot and also on health sanitation and how to work with restaurants. Also, how to tend to her daughter.

She learned a lot.

She learned that there is help if you look for it. It helped her prepare to be a parent.

She liked it a lot because her daughter enjoyed attending. The teachers were great.

She liked it very much and learned a lot. Her children learned much from the program.

She liked it very much. And she recommended it to her friends.

She met several people and she became more social.

She really believes it helped her understand how to get around in new territory.

She went in without knowing how to be a parent and AVANCE helped her how to be a mother and helped understand her children.

The impact was to get to know new places.

The patience for my child, I had no idea on how to be a mother.

The program taught me to become a better mother.

The program was great.

They educated me on how to take care of my children and how to teach my children.

They helped me to realize that there is a better life and helped me as a parent.

They helped me to understand how to be a better mother.

They helped me with the child development. It helped me to understand.

They helped me with the mannerism of life, and they taught me about life.

They helped my child to become independent and me to become a better mother.

They taught me how to be a better parent and how to communicate with others.

They taught me about my children, caring for them.

They taught me how to treat my children with both education and life.

They taught me to be a mother first and understand them better.

They taught me to how to make toys without having to spend money.

Exhibit 84: What impact did AVANCE have on your life?
Answers with minimal editing [repeated comment n times]
Taught me about my children.
To become independent especially with a special-need child.
To become more responsible with my family.
Very good! [21]
Very important! [4]
Very positive! [2]
Very satisfactory because I learned many things about the country that I did not know.
Very strong! [6]

Mothers were asked about the impact they believed AVANCE had on their children’s lives. Exhibit 85 lists their answers. The list spans several pages, but it was important to show the diversity of comments and ways of expressing them.

Exhibit 85: What impact did AVANCE have on your child’s (ren’s) life (lives)?
Answers with minimal editing [repeated comment n times]
A big impact. [6]
A favorable impact. [5]
A great educational program. [2]
A great impact. [2]
A great one, they helped them to speak in English and get along with children their age.
AVANCE helped them to learn to socialize and taught them how important school is.
Both children learned a lot and it helped them be more advanced.
Excellent! [6]
For me it helped me to socialize with other people.
Gave them a great opportunity to start school.
Good impact for children. [5]
He advanced on his learning skills.
He became more social with other children. [6]
He learned his fundamentals.
He learned more and was more active at home and at school.
He loved to be with the other children, to color and play with the other children.
He was able to start school without being shy.
He was just a baby; they supported him with social skills.
He was not social and when he went to school was not afraid.

Exhibit 85: What impact did AVANCE have on your child's (ren's) life (lives)?

Answers with minimal editing [repeated comment n times]

He was shy, and they helped him get out of that situation.

He was shy at first, and they helped him to be more confident. His social skills improved.

He was shy, and they helped him get along with other children.

He was trained at a very young age to pick up his toys, to be responsible.

Helped the girl to start school.

Helped her child be more social with other children.

Helped her children get prepared for school.

Helped him socialize with other children.

Her child learned a lot.

Her daughter learned how to interact with other children.

Her son learned how to read and be more social at age 4.

How to behave and get along with others.

Plays good with other children and likes school.

It gave us a better attitude toward life.

It had a great impact because they learned the basic of education and learned how to get along with other children.

It had a great impact, they are now doing excellent in school.

It helped her academically.

It helped her be more social, sharing and be better with her siblings.

It helped her because now she enjoyed interacting with the other children and learned her letters, colors and more.

It helped her son advance academically.

It helped her son be more prepared for school.

It helped her son learn a lot and be more prepared for school.

It helped her son to be more social with other children.

It helped her to improve her self-esteem and be more social.

It helped him be independent.

It helped him to get along with the other children.

It helped prepare her for school and be more disciplined.

It helped prepare the children to be ready for school and they learned English very quickly.

It helped them a lot because their grades are very good now.

It helped them be better children. They are good children now.

It helped them be more independent and be more social.

It helped them be more respectable and they enjoy studying.

It helped them develop faster at an earlier age.

It helped them to begin detaching from parent and begin socializing with other children.

It helped them to speak English.

Exhibit 85: What impact did AVANCE have on your child's (ren's) life (lives)?

Answers with minimal editing [repeated comment n times]

It helped them with school achievement.

It made a difference because of the training received that enabled her to support her children better.

It prepared my child for school and become more independent.

It taught him to get along with other children.

Lots; they helped them be more social.

My child became more sociable.

My child was too small, but it helped him be social.

My children became more social.

My children became more secure and independent.

My children were shy and they became more comfortable with other children.

My daughter was shy and helped her be friendlier.

Positive, communication, sociable.

Prepared him for school; he likes school.

Prepared them for school.

Pretty good in school and more communication.

Prior to program, she as a parent was very hard on her children, but after program she became a better mother and thus they became better children. As a mom she had no clue on how to help her children regarding developmental stages. After the program she did.

She became more comfortable around children.

She enjoyed going to school with her mom or together.

She had a great opportunity to learn before attending school.

The baby wasn't born yet, but she read to baby while she was pregnant.

The older child became more prepared for school.

They are better prepared for school.

They are really good children and I believe that AVANCE had a big impact on them.

They became more self-confident.

They became more sociable.

They came out of their shell.

They enjoyed attending the program.

They enjoyed going because they learned.

They enjoyed the program.

They enjoyed the toys that I made for them; you don't have to have lots of money in order to have toys.

They got used to being around other children.

They helped him with his speech impairment.

They helped me prepare them for school.

Exhibit 85: What impact did AVANCE have on your child’s (ren’s) life (lives)?
Answers with minimal editing [repeated comment n times]
They helped my child to become more advanced than other children; she became independent while attending AVANCE.
They helped my children how to be more independent.
They learned a lot.
They learned educational things.
They learned how to communicate with other children.
They learned how to live differently in a very dangerous place. They taught us how to survive.
They learned how to speak English correctly and prepared them for school.
They learned not to be shy and be around other children and learning the principles of education.
They learned the beginning of education and how to get along with others.
They learned the principles and learned to get along with other children.
They learned to communicate with others as well as myself.
They liked it.
They loved it because it was a learning experience and a fun environment.
They prepared them for school.
They really enjoyed going there and helped my child be better prepared for school.
They still remember the program in how much life is worth and they still have friends from there.
They taught her the basic of learning. ABCs. 123s.
They taught them to become ready for school, they taught them some of the things I could not teach them.
Very good. [23]
Very important. [3]
Very positive impact; they became more independent.
Very strong. [6]

A content analysis was performed to get a sense of how often the main concepts imbedded in the mothers’ descriptions were present. Exhibit 86 shows a frequency distribution of the most salient concepts resulting from the analysis. In total, 12 main concepts were derived from the text and subsequently used to organize the main ideas. The first in the list is a generic concept, labeled *Positive*, used to represent short answers, “It was great,” “A big impact,” “A favorable impact,” “Excellent,” etc. These expressions show that the mothers thought the program had a positive impact on their children but did not elaborate. There were at least 56 instances of such comments, or 29.5 percent of the answers (Exhibit 86).

Exhibit 86: AVANCE Impact on Children – Qualitative Analysis Summary		
Type of Impact	Total	%
Positive (Great, Big, Excellent, etc.)	56	29.5
Academic	46	24.2
Sociability	41	21.6
Attitude	9	4.7
Behavior	8	4.2
Enjoyment	7	3.7
Independent	7	3.7
Communication	4	2.1
Confidence	4	2.1
English	4	2.1
Development	3	1.6
Special Needs	1	0.5
Total	190	100.0

Many comments, however, were specific, and the two most frequent ideas were that the program prepared their children for school academically and socially. They learned basic literacy and math concepts that would result in their performing well in school, and they also learned to get along with their peers and work with them with a sense of community. These ideas were present in 45.8 percent of the comments (Academic: 24.2 percent, Sociability: 21.6 percent). Mothers also mentioned several other concepts, although less frequently. They indicated that AVANCE improved their children’s attitude and behavior; that they learned to be more independent and to communicate effectively with both their peers and adults; that they got a sense of joy, particularly when going to AVANCE to meet the other children; and that they gained a sense of confidence about themselves. They reported that their English also improved, as their general development and growth did. One mother indicated that AVANCE helped her child with his speech impairment.

Mothers were asked about the best thing AVANCE did for them or their families. Exhibit 87 lists their answers. The list spans several pages, but it was important to show the diversity of comments and ways of expressing them.

Exhibit 87: What was the best thing AVANCE did for you or your family?

Answers with minimal editing [repeated comment n times]

Assisted them to be more social and her child graduated with her first diploma.
Better family relationships and understanding.
Better parent communication.
Brought the family closer together.
Child care for my daughter while I was attending college.
Child care.
Children behavior and family communication.
Communication and better family relations.
Communication and better understanding.
Communication and education.
Communication and English.
Communication and goals. [7]
Communication and helped reach a goal. [2]
Communication and learning English.
Communication and improved parenting.
Communication and relationship with family.
Communication. [3]
Communication with family.
Communication and we became closer.
Communication and parenting.
Communication; got better with my child.
Comunicación con la familia. [Communication within the family.]
Educated her in many areas of life.
Educated me more with my children.
Educating her; she learned how to have self-esteem, make friends, be a better parent and know that child begins learning way before they are in school.
Education for my children, it had referrals to keep going.
Education. [3]
Family communication.
Family unity and communication. [2]
For my child not to be afraid of people. And I had the opportunity to learn because of them.
Free classes and helped us with credit cards for clothes and food.
Grow as a family.
Guides to improve parenthood.
Helped get closer in our communication.
Helped her educate her children.
Helped her how to play with children, how to pick toys safe for children and many more.

Exhibit 87: What was the best thing AVANCE did for you or your family?

Answers with minimal editing [repeated comment n times]

Helped her understand as a mom her children and her spouse and as a couple to stay together.

Helped me educate on how to bring up my children.

Helped me in how to become a better parent.

Helped son with educational toys and understand that children can have toys they create not only bought.

Helped them during the time they were there with the activities.

Helped them prepare for school and obtain other information she needed to know, such as help with school.

Helped them to communicate better parent and child.

Helped them with communication skills between daughter and mother.

Helped us to achieve our goals.

Helped us with more information on help for emergency and community information.

Her son had surgery and she was able to fill out paperwork quickly all due to the training she got in AVANCE because she was able to speak English.

How to be a better parent than what my mother was to me.

How to become a better family and take care of each other.

How to communicate better with my children in their education and lifestyle.

How to educate my family more and helped my child be prepared for school.

How to speak better to her children and how to play with them and their behavior in general.

I didn't speak English; they taught me how to speak English and now I am attending college.

I enjoyed the parenting classes and it helped me tons.

I enjoyed the toy-making, since I had no money to buy them gifts.

I learned things that I was not aware of.

I loved the classes they taught because it helped me to become a better mother.

Improved family communication.

It brought us closer together, communication.

It centered her, made her more focused and assisted her in detaching from her son.

It helped her be a better parent and help her child academically.

It helped her be a better parent. [2]

It helped her be more conscious about discipline and changed her ways of disciplining her children's behavior.

It helped her create toys for her children.

It helped her have better communication with her daughters and spouse. How to have a better home environment.

It helped her how to be a better parent.

It helped her learn how to play, communicate and take care of her children.

It helped her speak better, more reasonable, be more patient and control her temper better and have a better family by communicating as a family.

Exhibit 87: What was the best thing AVANCE did for you or your family?

Answers with minimal editing [repeated comment n times]

It helped me become a better parent.
It helped prepare her son for school and she believed AVANCE is a great program.
It helped the entire family; it united them as a family.
It helped them be able to graduate. She enjoyed the program and learned a lot and would like to take more classes instead of being at home.
It helped them be more united, be more confident and to do things better.
It helped them have better communication skills.
It helped them meet people; they had just arrived in the city.
It helped us by us knowing that we can make things without money and taught me to be there for my children.
It helped us educate our children better for the future.
It helped us with our communication, bonding and let us know that there was support. Encouraged me to attend school.
It opened doors for her as a parent and she learned how to reach out to other resources all due to AVANCE.
It prepared me to be a better parent.
It taught us to communicate and provide other ways to interact with our children.
Kept the family together and learned new experiences.
Learn to be a family and interact with each other.
Learning to be a better family.
Made her a better parent as far as taking time to do projects and crafts with her children.
Mas seguros en nosotros mismos. [We have more self-confidence.]
Motivated to finish high school.
Motivation on education and GED.
My education.
Offered a good opportunity for family to grow.
Our family became closer to each other.
Parenting classes on how to be a good spouse and parent. [2]
Parenting classes, bonding with other parents.
Parenting classes.
Participation in children's life.
[Helped me] prepare excellent goals.
Provided parenting knowledge.
Provided services for free and helped me to understand that I can provide for my family.
Provided support for my family.
Provided us with lots of help.
Relationship with family.

Exhibit 87: What was the best thing AVANCE did for you or your family?

Answers with minimal editing [repeated comment n times]

Safety of our children. They taught us how to be good parents.
She enjoyed learning how to create costumes and other items from things she had at home.
She liked AVANCE so much she was sharing her experience with friends so they could join the program.
She promotes AVANCE because it helped her family a lot and her sister is currently attending.
She was able to leave home and learned many things during the speaking engagements and the advice the teachers gave them.
Stability and communication.
Support for my children.
Taught me how to communicate with my children.
Taught me to do a lot for my family with the little I had.
That there are organizations that can always help you.
The classes of parents and the testimonies that I heard about what was possible in life.
The help they provided for her children. Gave good advice to move forward.
The importance of the family being united and knowing the needs of each of her children and also to understand her husband.
The parenting classes.
The support of encouragement to go back to school and that it is never too late.
They brought us more together. And they helped my children be prepared for school.
They did tons for my family and taught me how do better for my family.
They gave me a chance to continue my education.
They helped me by giving us information on different programs.
They helped me by informing me of all the help that I can receive here in the United States.
They helped me to be a better mother.
They helped me obtain my GED; I was struggling and they helped me with tutoring.
They helped me realize that there were good opportunities; gave me lots of resources for helping with food.
They helped us prepare for the future and that there was a way out of poverty.
They helped us with my family both emotionally and with money.
They made us aware of our surroundings that there was a better world out there.
They opened my eyes into being a good role model for my children.
They provided me with information about taking care of my family.
They provided me with information on education, helped with credit cards and parenting classes.
They taught me how to be a better mother.
They taught me how to survive and how to obtain the help I needed.
They taught me how to use sewing machine and other information I needed toward my life.
They taught me that life can be better if we attended school.

Exhibit 87: What was the best thing AVANCE did for you or your family?

Answers with minimal editing [repeated comment n times]

They taught me to be a better person.
They taught us how to live life.
To get an education in order to move forward.
To keep goals.
To socialize with other people and how to ask for help in a country I did not know.
To value my life.
United family and communication. [4]
Very strong family unit and communication. [2]

A content analysis was performed to get a sense of how often the main concepts imbedded in the mothers’ description were present. Exhibit 88 shows a frequency distribution of the most salient concepts resulting from the analysis. In total, 10 main concepts were derived from the text and subsequently used to organize the main ideas. Three of those 10 concepts permeated the mothers’ answers. Sometimes, they were expressed individually, but most often mothers used them together, almost as a unit. The three concepts were *improved parenting*, *communication*, and *family relationships*, representing a combined frequency of 60.9 percent (Exhibit 88). The mothers indicated that AVANCE helped them be better parents and how to communicate with both their children and their husbands, which resulted in improved family unity, often saving their families from possible failure and dissolution. Other most frequently mentioned *best things* (AVANCE did) included supporting their education and that of their children (18.6 percent), providing basic economic support when they most needed it (5.4 percent), and helping them setting and achieving goals for them and their families (4.7 percent).

Exhibit 88: Best Thing AVANCE Did for Mothers and Their Families – Qualitative Analysis Summary

Best Thing AVANCE Did	Total	%
Parenting	54	20.9
Communication	52	20.2
Family relationship	51	19.8
Education	31	12.0
Early Childhood Education	17	6.6
Economic support	14	5.4

**Exhibit 88: Best Thing AVANCE Did for Mothers and Their Families
– Qualitative Analysis Summary**

Best Thing AVANCE Did	Total	%
Goals (setting, reaching)	12	4.7
Information	12	4.7
Self-esteem	11	4.3
English	4	1.6
Total	258	100.0

Finally, during the face-to-face interviews, participants were asked if there were any barriers or if there was anything AVANCE could do to improve their participation in the program. For the most part, they echoed the themes of the telephone interviews – most barriers were dealing with their own personal situations (their English, child care for some of their children, etc.). What they wanted from AVANCE was more classes, particularly English and GED, more often and in all the centers (Exhibit 89).

Exhibit 89: Mothers on Barriers, Lasting Effects and Suggestions for Improvement

San Antonio

1. When Alma thought back about her AVANCE experience, she suggested that the program be extended to a different level, not only at the parenting level but at the professional level as well. Furthermore, she believes that AVANCE is not a *program* but a family affair. Alma said, “AVANCE takes you by the hand and shows you the skills needed to improve your lifestyle.”
2. The only barriers Claudia identified were her limited education and the lack of English language knowledge. After taking English classes, she acknowledged that through AVANCE, many doors were opened to further her education and increase her positive vision for a better life for herself and her family.
3. A barrier Cynthia spoke about was that the program had English classes but they were offered only twice a week. She wanted them to be offered more often. Cynthia recalled taking a trip to Palo Alto Community College to tour the campus and visit a classroom, and she felt that this should be practiced more often, as this gives the parent the opportunity to see that they too attend college.
4. Diane did not identify barriers to the program but instead stated, “Everything was very useful and interesting, a powerful source.” Diane disclosed that she felt so strong about AVANCE that even her grown children, who are now parents, have participated in the AVANCE parent program. She feels, “It’s just a great program and parents – single and married – should look up to it.”

Exhibit 89: Mothers on Barriers, Lasting Effects and Suggestions for Improvement

5. Elizabeth's only barrier was child care, and AVANCE quickly helped her overcome that barrier by providing the early childhood education services. Because AVANCE was always willing to work with her, Elizabeth would walk every day to leave her children at a daycare then catch a bus to go to San Antonio College. On cold rainy days, AVANCE would provide a van to assist her. If Elizabeth could say two things about AVANCE they would be: "AVANCE can be lifesaving" and "The staff is caring and passionate."
6. Erika wanted to pursue her post-secondary education. But, a major barrier she was confronting was child care for her older children which she had not solved at the time of the interview. Regarding AVANCE, the classes Erika attended were so good that she did not want them to end. She credited the classes for learning the skills needed for the proper growth and development of her children and the advancement of her family.
7. Irene felt the English classes would have been beneficial if they had been offered in the same campus during her participation with the program. She believes that AVANCE has more resources than they used to. AVANCE provided transportation, which made it convenient for them to participate in the program.
8. Mónica felt her lack of proficiency in the English language was still a barrier, but she had the self-confidence and self-esteem she needed to get to where she wanted to be, once her children were older and out of school. The biggest barrier was that the program ended prior to the nine months because the center closed. She stated they were supposed to contact her so she could continue the program at another location, but she never heard from anyone until she was contacted about the survey. The participation with the AVANCE program helped build Mónica's self-esteem and self-confidence and facilitated her leadership and financing skills to become a better mother.
9. Sandra's main barrier was to overcome inertia and contact AVANCE. Once she did, her experience in the AVANCE program was an illuminating discovery of self-worth.

Dallas

1. María did not share any barriers she encountered during her participation in the program.
2. There was nothing Martina could think of that could have improved her experience with AVANCE. The program helped Martina learn how to communicate and be more social with her children.
3. The barrier Mónica shared was her inability to communicate because of her shyness. The AVANCE classes and the teachers motivated her and contributed to build her confidence in communicating with others. The motivation the teachers provided enabled her to believe in herself.
4. Norma felt she would have benefited more if there were additional classes or programs AVANCE could offer. She did not want to stop learning because she believed in the benefits of the program.

Exhibit 89: Mothers on Barriers, Lasting Effects and Suggestions for Improvement

5. Patricia was enthusiastic about the program and its potential to change people's life. She did not have any barrier to participate in the program.
6. Rocío did not mention any barriers she encountered during her active participation in the program.

Houston

1. Hilda stated that her AVANCE experience would have been improved had there been a GED program when she was participating at another site (Pasadena, Texas). Otherwise, she regards AVANCE as a great program, where people are receiving instruction in areas of needs. Hilda expressed her gratitude toward the early childhood education center and the teachers, who have the patience to help people learn. She remarked that they played an important role in her AVANCE experience, taking care of her children while she was learning.
2. Lorena's most disappointing part of the AVANCE experience was that she did not advance her education. That goal was one of the reasons she was excited about the program. Lorena was a high school graduate (in Mexico) when she got married, but was always interested in furthering her education. Her experience at AVANCE heightened her motivation to study and seek higher education, specifically a diploma or degree in child development.
3. Once María's daughters were enrolled in elementary school and were no longer participating with AVANCE, María also stopped coming to classes. She thought that parents could not attend without having any children in the program. María was informed by the program director that she was welcome to continue her courses at AVANCE. She reported that when the opportunity was presented to her, she took several English classes and one in computing.

Austin

1. Because of work and time constraints, Josefina was not able to participate in AVANCE as long as she would have preferred. The AVANCE program helped integrate the family into the community and relieved the sense of isolation upon their arrival from Mexico. The AVANCE team always told her young son that he would grow up to be an engineer. In fact, her young son is currently studying engineering at the university.
2. María noted that some people did not have transportation, and they would sometimes miss the sessions.
3. Nancy's only comment was that she misunderstood how the GED program worked and erroneously thought she needed to learn English before she could participate in the program. No actions were noted during interview because she attributed not taking the GED classes to her own misunderstandings.
4. Linda did not mention any perceived limitations or barriers of the program.

Exhibit 89: Mothers on Barriers, Lasting Effects and Suggestions for Improvement

El Paso

1. Beatriz did not identify any shortcomings to the AVANCE program. She felt all aspects of the program were excellent. She only cited not having opportunity to take the GED classes, but understood why they were not available while she was attending.
2. María did not complete high school, but her desire to learn has always been there. She tried to get into the GED classes at AVANCE, but for some reason could not do so. Today she still aspires to get her GED, but more than anything else, she wants to master English.

Case Studies

Findings:

1. Most mothers came to AVANCE through one of three routes: (a) following the advice of a friend or family member who knew AVANCE or had participated in it, (b) recruited to AVANCE by a staff member who visited them at home, or (c) sought an organization that could help them and chose AVANCE.
2. Most mothers came to AVANCE because they wanted to know more about parenting but were positively surprised that AVANCE provided much more than that.
3. Mothers enjoyed the safe and supportive environment provided by AVANCE.
4. Mothers learned about parenting and child development, but they were even more impressed by what they learned about themselves – that they could have successful lives, have good relationships with their children and spouses, and be leaders both at home and in their communities.
5. They learned new ways of helping their children to be successful at school by helping them at home and involving themselves with the school by forming partnerships with teachers.
6. Mothers learned new skills that enabled them to find jobs or explore new opportunities, such as creating small businesses or starting community projects.
7. New skills learned include setting stretched but attainable goals, improved communication ability, and using organization and planning tools.
8. Mothers gained a sense of self-worth and regained confidence in themselves.

The following 24 case studies are derived from the face-to-face interviews analysis. Each case conveys in a one-page summary the essence of the participant's AVANCE experience, retaining as much as possible her own voice, feelings and language. In cases where space was available, a bulleted summary of what was learned in the case also was provided. Participants were extremely honest and sometimes provided information that was too personal to include in a document of this nature. In those cases, we omitted some of the details while maintaining the essence of their experience. The case studies are presented by city and in alphabetical order of the participants' first name. Additional identifying information was omitted to provide some degree of anonymity in order to respect participants' privacy.

San Antonio



Case Study # 1

Alma started her participation in AVANCE in 2003 but only completed 70 percent of the program for personal reasons. When she became pregnant with her second child, she returned to AVANCE in order to continue improving her parenting skills because she knew there was something she needed to change. Alma was raised in a family where severe discipline was the norm, and her ideas were ignored. She felt she did not have a voice or a choice. She realized she was raising her children in the same way. Her participation in AVANCE was a “life-changing” event. She learned that children were beginning to develop socially, emotionally, mentally and physically and that they, as well as adults, made mistakes and learn from them. She learned that it is important to respect and guide them through that process of growth.

Through the participation and training she received from the program, Alma learned the importance of reading to her children and spending time with them. As a result, her children were highly literate, which earned them numerous honors at school. Her 7-year-old daughter is reading at a fifth grade level, her second daughter is attending a prestigious middle school, and her son gained a scholarship for college.

Alma’s experience at AVANCE prompted her to complete her education. The child care AVANCE provided was an essential support to her educational goals. She enrolled in a master’s program at a local university. AVANCE also was an essential factor in achieving her professional dream of becoming a seventh grade science teacher.

Learning about the importance of financial literacy through AVANCE, Alma became a professional that knew first-hand the importance of education, buying a home, opening a checking account and saving for college. Because of this knowledge, she has set up a college fund for her oldest child.

Alma’s participation in AVANCE changed her in profound ways. It enabled her to see herself as a leader in her children’s school and in the community, and to see herself as a woman who can achieve her goals and give back to the community. Alma started a community action project that targeted Spanish-speaking parents and their children in high school to ensure that they learn the financial aid procedures for college as a way of giving back to the community.

Thinking back on her AVANCE experience, Alma suggested AVANCE take the program to the next level, not only at the parenting level but at the professional level as well. Furthermore, she believed that AVANCE was not just a program but a family affair: “AVANCE takes you by the hand and shows you the skills needed to improve your life.”

San Antonio



Case Study # 2

Claudia completed the nine-month AVANCE program in 2001 with the advice of a friend, who assured her that mothers improved their parenting skills after participating in AVANCE. Since she had two young children and wanted to become a better parent, she jumped at the opportunity.

AVANCE opened the doors for Claudia, who came from Mexico with only a middle school education and did not speak English. AVANCE gave her the information and the confidence to begin learning English and to take GED classes in her community. AVANCE was instrumental in improving her self-esteem and learning to set stretched yet attainable goals. She applied those goal setting skills to outline her educational aspirations. First, she obtained her GED diploma. But she did not stop there. With AVANCE support, she started taking nursing classes to become a registered nurse.

Through her partnership with AVANCE, her children acquired oral language skills and social development to create the structures and routines necessary for a strong educational foundation. Through the AVANCE experience, Claudia deepened her relationship with her children, learned the importance of reading early and showing interest in their grades and accomplishments in school.

She also deepened her communication with her husband and the rest of the family. As a result, the family started a small flooring business. To accomplish this, Claudia and her husband partnered to divide their different responsibilities, so that there would be a balance of handling the many tasks necessary to build and maintain the business. This was a major achievement. Claudia credited AVANCE for this accomplishment and other family successes.

In summary, AVANCE enabled Claudia to overcome her initial limited education and lack of English language knowledge. AVANCE helped her learn English and attain a new understanding of her self-worth. Through AVANCE, many doors opened to further her education and improve her relationship with her family. She and her husband now focus on working together to achieve their dreams for a positive future and a better life.

San Antonio



Case Study # 3

Cynthia, a mother of five, participated in AVANCE in 2003 with one of her children. Cynthia explained with teary eyes that she sought assistance from AVANCE because she needed parenting skills. Being young and naïve, she said, she almost lost her two older children. She recalled that AVANCE was very welcoming and that they did not discriminate because of participants' backgrounds. AVANCE's instructors knew that parents were in the program because they were just trying to make a better future for themselves and their children.

Cynthia remembered with a sense of excitement the classes she took, especially the sewing class. She found sewing very enlightening. She learned to make plastic-bag dispensers and curtains. Her teachers were very open minded, she said. They did not judge and were patient with her. Prior to joining AVANCE, she had never used a sewing machine. She really enjoyed learning that skill, so much so that she got her own sewing machine. With the sewing skills she learned at AVANCE, she started sewing diaper dispensers as gifts for baby showers.

In AVANCE, Cynthia learned to create arts and crafts for her children. With joy on her face, she explained in detail that experience: "I still have an activity book that they gave us. The book still smells to this day. You can still smell the cards and the pepper in there. It was made out of poster board. We colored the pictures; we glued them on there, and then the little scents. We had little cotton balls for them. One particular scent we used was baby powder. We got baby powder and we dipped it very well while we were sewing the sachets and then we sewed them up and attached them to the book. The book covers were cardboard, and at the end, it actually had yarn string that you put on there. You could use different colors if you wanted. We had a lot of arts and crafts." She said with conviction that her experience with AVANCE was so welcoming and brought her immense joy.

AVANCE inspired her to continue her education, and she obtained her GED in 2004. She tried to get a degree in hygiene but stopped because she was unable to go to school full-time and still keep her job, which she both needed and enjoyed. She worked with the health department in the epidemiology division. Working there these last five years has brightened new horizons for her in terms of learning about different careers. Because of her AVANCE experience, she was thinking of continuing in that direction with her education.

Cynthia also volunteered at her church with the youth group. Cynthia and her husband both taught classes for marital improvement. Based on this experience, they brought to their church a program called "Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage." She described it as a comical and biblical way of looking at marriages. Participants had fun and learned a lot too, she said.

The AVANCE program helped her with her self-esteem and inspired in her a whole new outlook on life. It made her appreciate her contribution at work and be an active participant in her community.

Indeed, she learned the parenting skills she was seeking from AVANCE in the first place. AVANCE taught her to be patient and to show more grace toward her children. She learned the importance of education and spending quality time with her children. AVANCE helped her recognize that parents are their children's first teachers.

In addition to these parenting skills, AVANCE gave her much more, she said. AVANCE gave her hope. She learned to see herself and others in a new light and to see the light at the end of the tunnel when she was going through such a rough time in her own life.

San Antonio



Case Study # 4

Diane, a mother of four, last participated in AVANCE in 1989. All four of her children participated in the program. When she started at AVANCE, she had three. Her oldest child was four. Her middle one was two, and the youngest was only four months old. There was a gap of 10 years before her last child participated. At the time of the interview, this child was 16 and was attending high school. All four children completed the nine-month program. AVANCE left such a deep impression on her children that, as parents, they too have participated in the AVANCE PCEP. They felt that there were a lot of knowledge and skills there they could not get at the same level from other sources.

Diane sought assistance from AVANCE because her second child had a hearing impairment. AVANCE helped her understand her child's impairment and went much further than that. They taught her parenting and communication skills that were instrumental in helping her raise her children and improve her relationship with her husband and the rest of the family. Impressed with her progress, her husband participated in the fatherhood program, which made a profound impact in their lives.

Prior to joining AVANCE, Diane recognized that she was young and did not think often about her future. Like most young mothers, she had little guidance about parenting skills and the responsibilities associated with having her own family. She acknowledged that had it not been for AVANCE, she would have been lost, and her future could have been rather bleak. In contrast, she recalled that a typical day in the AVANCE program was a "fun-filled day." AVANCE taught her to overcome her shyness and communicate with people effectively. AVANCE helped her reach her goals by enabling her to participate in a program called Untapped Potential. This was a special program based on a partnership between AVANCE and Palo Alto College. It helped her master job skills that ultimately helped her land a job with the San Antonio Housing Authority. AVANCE showed her the importance of reading, spending quality time with her children and providing effective discipline. She enjoyed participating in all AVANCE classes and activities and especially liked the toy making classes and the field trips, from which she said she learned much.

Diane credited AVANCE for her involvement in the community. At the time of the interview, she volunteered at a local council. There, she has held positions as secretary and parliamentarian. In her role, she has been able to meet and communicate with community leaders and even famous people, she said. Part of the requirements for this position was to help those in need. She was able to provide people with resources that were available but unknown to them. She also directed people who were homeless to places throughout the city where they could find shelter. She credits AVANCE for her being able to do this effectively. She overcame her shyness with the communications skills they taught her in the program.

Thinking about her future, Diane would like to own a business someday. She wanted a business in sales. Although she felt her educational goals were fulfilled at that time – her focus then was on learning job skills, not getting a college degree. She would like to further her education by studying marketing at the college level. To sum her opinion about the program, Diane said: "AVANCE helped us educate our children better for their future. It really helped me keep my children out of trouble. They taught us skills on how to get out of poverty level and stop living under government assistance."

San Antonio



Case Study # 5

Elizabeth was a young mother when she was recruited for the AVANCE program. Pregnant at 17 and a mother at 18, she did not like anyone knocking on her door, but AVANCE kept inviting her to join their program. Once she began attending classes, she realized that it was fun and her baby was close by in the nursery downstairs. She liked it so much that she now works for AVANCE as a coordinator of its home based services for Early Head Start. As part of her responsibilities, Elizabeth informed and encouraged families and community members to participate in their parenting program. She shared with them her positive experiences and her contagious enthusiasm.

After she graduated from the program, Elizabeth took computer literacy and college readiness classes. Then she attended San Antonio College to get her associate's degree. She admitted that after graduating from high school, she did not consider going to college, but she learned in AVANCE that this was possible for her. Staff members helped her with financial aid paperwork and made sure she submitted all the necessary documents required every semester. She received a Stone Court scholarship through AVANCE. They also provided her assistance to get a home computer. She received her associate's degree in 2003 and began working toward her bachelor's degree from the University of the Incarnate Word soon after.

Elizabeth wanted to assure that her children receive a good education from the start. She credited AVANCE for instilling in her the fact that reading to her children every day was critical for their literacy development. Through AVANCE, she learned much about raising children, including positive discipline, and was proud to say that her three children were doing well in school. Her oldest child was doing exceptionally well. She was an honor student and involved herself in many school extra-curricular activities, including the National Honor Society, Student Council, Business and Banking Club, and Police Explorer. In whatever spare time she had, she did volunteer work and was already looking into attending college, possibly Texas A&M at Corpus Christi or Baylor University.

As a result of her commitment to her children's education, acquired through AVANCE, Elizabeth developed good relationships with their teachers and was an active participant in the school PTA, running for office at one point. She learned that being involved in her children's education was critical for their success.

Regarding AVANCE as an organization, Elizabeth was very appreciative of the fact that they were always willing to work with her through her particular circumstances. They provided all kinds of help, even some that were completely unexpected. On cold, rainy days, AVANCE would offer a van to assist her and her children. That was why if Elizabeth could say two things about AVANCE they would be: "AVANCE can be lifesaving" and "The staff is there because they want to be there."

San Antonio



Case Study # 6

When Erika was pregnant with her first child, she yearned for opportunities to increase her knowledge of child rearing. Coincidentally, one of her friends who had attended classes at AVANCE encouraged her to join what she described as a great program that would help her in her journey of being a mother. After enrolling in 2009, Erika was so excited about the things she was learning that she continued with the program with her second baby and was seeking information to remain active in the program for her third child.

One major thing Erika learned from AVANCE classes was about balancing nutrition needs and budgeting family's daily expenses. Another important area she learned about was effective discipline techniques, which emphasize communication and understanding rather than physical punishment.

Regarding schooling, Erika learned the importance of shared responsibility in her children's education. Talks and meetings with her son's teachers became common routine as well as daily talks with her children about the importance of going to school every day. Erika reinforced good study habits for her children to be successful in school. When asked about her children's education, Erika shared that her oldest son wanted to join the Army because his godfather was in the military. She said that she would support him in whatever career decisions he would make.

Before the AVANCE program, Erika was not acquainted with the resources available in the community that could help her children in school. But after participation at AVANCE, she became a regular visitor to the public library with her children to check out books and read to them 30 minutes every night. As a family, they also started participating in recreational activities in the community, she said.

As far as her educational background, Erika completed high school in Mexico and was seeking to learn more English to get her GED in the United States. She understood that having her educational credentials in the United States would contribute to a better future for herself and her family. As a result, she was determined to pursue her post-secondary education.

Erika reiterated that AVANCE classes were so good that she did not want them to end. She credited AVANCE for helping her learn the skills she needed to stimulate and guide the proper growth and development of her children, and organizational and planning skills that promoted the advancement of her family. Through AVANCE, Erika said, her children's social skills were developed, as they learned to interact with their peers and adults during the time they spent in the program. Finally, AVANCE also offered the opportunity to meet and make friends that provided a circle of support for Erika and her family and to this day she keeps in touch with many of them.

San Antonio



Case Study # 7

Irene, a mother of three children, participated in AVANCE in 2003 with her daughter, who attended middle school. Irene learned about AVANCE through a flier that was distributed at her older daughter's school. She was thankful that AVANCE came to her community because she learned so much from the program, which helped build her self-esteem and self-confidence.

In Mexico, Irene already had her high school diploma and was working as a nurse's assistant. At AVANCE, she participated in the literacy, English as a second language, and parenting and sewing classes. AVANCE provided transportation using a van, and Irene developed a deep friendship with the driver, who she credited for motivating her and constantly reminded her to renew her Certified Nursing Assistant license to be able to use her nurse's knowledge and skills in this country.

Through her participation with other mothers, Irene learned about health issues and new techniques in sewing with a machine. Her self-esteem and confidence increased dramatically. The new supportive friendships and encouraging support from AVANCE staff led Irene to renew her license and to grow in many areas of her life.

Irene explained that one thing she enjoyed was learning different techniques for sewing. Using these techniques, she made a rhino Halloween costume for her daughter, a doll stuffed with cotton and hair made of yarn, a doll dress and a toy dice. She learned that through these toys, she can help her children develop their senses. For example, with the toy dice, they could feel different textures. Working with other mothers, Irene created a "scent book." They used real spices and different textures to make the book. When using the scent book, the children could smell the different spices and feel the different textures.

Irene had many fond memories of her daughter's participation in AVANCE. When they started the program on the first day, the teachers put the children in a train and held a parade with them to keep the children excited and perhaps to distract them from the fact that they would be separated from their mothers. Irene's daughter, who was very attached to her, cried the very first time that they needed to separate. Her consolation was a little stuffed bear. She would not let go of it. With time, she was able to leave the bear behind. She also overcame her separation anxieties and became more independent. The program helped her be ready for pre-kindergarten. When that time came, she was the only child who did not cry and one of the few who followed her teacher's directions fully. Most of the other children were naturally disconcerted by the new environment.

Irene's daughter benefited so much from AVANCE that Irene believes the program would have helped her other children progress faster and be less shy and timid, had she known the program at the time. She associated her daughter's love of reading and eagerness to learn with her early participation in AVANCE. As an example of this eagerness and enthusiasm, Irene shared that her daughter recently checked out 17 books from the public library to read in three weeks as part of a contest. She wanted to win the prize that would allow her to meet San Antonio's mayor, Julián Castro. She did not win and was very sad, but she cherished what she learned and the fact that she participated.

Irene's experience was so positive that she wrapped up the interview saying, "The best thing AVANCE did was that they came to our neighborhood and opened doors for the entire neighborhood."

San Antonio



Case Study # 8

Mónica, a mother of three children, started the program in 2004, when her first child was 3 years old. At the time of the interview, he turned 12 years old. She sought the AVANCE program because her son was having difficulty speaking. The only words he could say were “teta” and “agua,” two Spanish words meaning food (breast-milk) and water.

As a concerned mother, Mónica sought AVANCE’s help. She credited AVANCE with helping her develop her son’s speech and prepare him for school. He quickly learned the colors and how to interact with other children. Mónica also appreciated being able to receive personal health care at the AVANCE center. She thanked AVANCE for providing her with resources she was not aware existed. In a moment of reflection, Mónica said, “One thinks that providing food for our children is all they need, but children need more than just food.”

She learned parenting skills to build her son’s self-esteem and her own. Her son was recently featured in the Floresville newspaper as one of the top students in his school. He loved reading and wanted to become a doctor.

Mónica had a full-time job when she joined AVANCE. But, the motivation she received from AVANCE and the other parents in the program lifted her confidence, which made her feel capable of taking new challenges. As a result, she was nominated to be the president within her department working group.

The best thing AVANCE did for her was to teach her to be the very best mother she could be. They helped with the simple things, such as being patient with her children, how to interact with other people, and how to make friends and support each other. Mónica also learned crafts. She made a plastic-bag holder and a Halloween costume with the sewing machine. She said she still has a toy box and a photo album she created in the program in collaboration with other mothers.

As part of the community involvement aspect of the program, Mónica was examined directly at the center by a Planned Parenthood organization specialist. This provided her with important information about her health, and she was grateful to AVANCE for providing this kind of service. Other community speakers provided her with information that was always very useful and opened her eyes about what was possible.

Financial literacy was one of the many skills Mónica learned at AVANCE. She became a more mindful shopper and started managing her family’s finances better. This produced significant results, benefiting her family. As a result, the family started enjoying the freedom of home ownership. Over time, they created a side-business and acquired a rental home for extra income. She instilled this spirit of entrepreneurship in her children as they helped with baking goods and selling them in their neighborhood. Mónica credited their success to what she learned at AVANCE, and she believed it was one of the best things that happened to her and her children.

San Antonio



Case Study # 9

When Sandra enrolled in the AVANCE program in 2004, she could not imagine the immense value it would have for her. What motivated her to enroll was a sense of living an unfulfilled life, limited to the traditional roles of housewife and mother.

Sandra's powerful journey of self-transformation illustrated how AVANCE helps lead young mothers and their families to transform their future into one of hope and promise. As an immigrant with no formal secondary education and low self-esteem, Sandra felt limited in both opportunities and possibilities. Because of her participation in AVANCE, her self-esteem grew and with it, she began feeling valued and appreciated within her own family as a woman, wife and mother. AVANCE taught her concrete skills to improve her children's literacy levels and develop lifelong positive learning habits. Through AVANCE support and promotion of community resources, the family lifted itself from dire economic stress and government assistance to independence, home ownership and self-sufficiency.

Another aspect of Sandra's transformation was her concern for others. She started giving back to her community through her support of other children and families in similar circumstances. One way Sandra accomplished this was through her work at AVANCE, which provided her the opportunity to help young mothers in difficult conditions similar to her own. As part of this community involvement commitment, Sandra participated in the Dream Act movement, which attempted to help students who were undocumented at no fault of their own obtain some kind of regular status that would enable them to live a normal life and become productive citizens of this society.

At home, Sandra promoted a love of learning and college-going culture. AVANCE taught Sandra and her family that literacy was very important from the start. Therefore, reading became a tradition in her home. Through her parenting classes, Sandra learned the fundamentals of child development. The value of learning was consistently stressed, she said, emphasizing that children learned best through play. Sandra put this into practice, creating multiple games and strategies that emphasized learning through fun activities. As her children grew, these games became more demanding, developing their creativity, critical thinking skills and their love for lifelong learning. As a result, going to college became a given, not an option for her children. She indicated that even her 9 year old is talking about which college he wanted to attend.

Because of this commitment to formal education and understanding that deeds speak louder than words, Sandra decided to continue her own education. First, Sandra obtained her GED. Second, she went to college and was only about a month from attaining her bachelor's degree, at the time of the interview. Sandra said she would not stop there. She planned to earn a master's degree. Sandra and her family credited AVANCE for instilling in them this sense of resilience, improving their learning skills and empowering them with perseverance.

Dallas



Case Study # 1

María's life in Mexico was quite difficult. She lost her father early on, leaving her mother to take care of 10 children. María had to quit school when she was in the sixth grade. Knowing first-hand the difficulties her mother experienced, she desired a better life for her children.

Through word of mouth, María heard about AVANCE and thought it would be interesting to participate. The comments she heard were very positive and she knew her children would benefit as well as herself. With this vision in mind, she began her quest to better herself and her children. María enrolled herself and her children in AVANCE classes. She was delighted by the interesting speakers who visited and discussed important, motivating themes, such as valuing yourself, being a good role model for your children, and fostering a quality education. Her little ones enjoyed the classes even more.

Both María and her children blossomed at AVANCE. She noticed that the youngest ones who attended classes were much more prepared, motivated and confident by the time they entered school compared to her older children who had not had the AVANCE experience. AVANCE also prepared María to continue reinforcing school work at home with her children through learning games. She understood the power of reading to them daily, and this soon became a common practice for the family. María also gained the confidence to become a volunteer at school and support her children in any way she could. For all these reasons, María said: "Lo mejor que AVANCE ha hecho para mí es que yo siempre estoy motivando a mis hijos, aun cuando ellos se sientan desanimados. [The best thing AVANCE did for me, was that I am always giving encouragement to my children to continue, even when they are feeling down or discouraged.]"

Dallas



Case Study # 2

AVANCE often has impact across several generations in participating families, as in the case of Martina, a mother of seven children. She enrolled in AVANCE from 1999 to 2011. When she was ready to exit AVANCE in 2011, she recommended the program to her daughter-in-law because she felt it could provide her the same wonderful benefits that she had enjoyed for those three life-defining years.

One of those benefits Martina felt AVANCE provided was an environment of socialization and learning. She felt her girls were “loners” in the beginning. Then as time in the program continued, they began to interact more with the other children and looked forward to attending. Other benefits of the program for Martina’s children included an improvement in writing for her oldest, a love for coloring in her youngest, and an exposure to textures and creativity in playing with and making toys.

As a busy mother, she benefitted from an array of AVANCE support, from parenting classes to nutrition and education for infants, educational field trips, and toy making classes. In a supportive environment of socialization and learning, the whole family blossomed and improved in their writing skills and love of learning. AVANCE promoted daily reading at home, initially a challenge for Martina to do in English. With time, Martina’s children became avid readers. Martina credits the program with helping the members of her family to interact and socialize better with one another and with their peers.

Dallas



Case Study # 3

Mónica enrolled in AVANCE one year after she arrived in the United States. She first heard about AVANCE through her sister who had participated in the program, and Mónica was told AVANCE would help her with parenting skills. During her participation, her daughter went to the early childhood center at AVANCE while she attended classes.

AVANCE helped Mónica overcome shyness, and she developed good communication skills. As her child's first teacher, Mónica learned that children acquired their first knowledge at home. She also understood the importance of sending her child to school with a full stomach and well groomed. The program helped her understand the benefits of reading together at home and of building strong relationships at school with the teachers. Mónica soon became an active volunteer in after-school activities.

Through AVANCE money management and financial classes, she also began long-lasting good habits that paid big dividends over time. She started saving money early and taught her daughter to do the same, who opened a savings account for this purpose.

This successful mother and daughter pair both have done a lot with what each has acquired at AVANCE. Her daughter planned to go to college to pursue a career in business and her mother would support her all the way through graduation.

Dallas



Case Study # 4

Norma, a mother of three children, participated in the AVANCE program in 2002, based on what she learned about the program from people at her child's elementary school who recommended it strongly. Two of her three children participated in the program with her, as the oldest was already school-age when she learned of AVANCE. She participated in the program for approximately nine months but returned to take other courses AVANCE had to offer. Her last classes were taken about five years ago (2008) when she then graduated and received a certificate. Norma became involved in the program because of the education, security, communication and confidence it offered families as they engaged in crafts with their children and socialized with other families.

Norma acknowledged the program for improving her self-esteem and helping her with the socialization of her children. Norma appreciated the education, security, communication skills and confidence the program gave her. As her confidence developed, so did her involvement in her children's school and eventually became an active and proud volunteer in their school's bilingual program.

Norma learned from AVANCE good parenting skills and the important habit of early reading to her children. The toy-making classes helped her use available resources to design and create crafts and educational toys, which with little monetary investment yielded big dividends, in helping her children learn about the world around them through colors and textures. Her children experienced how to be responsible during playtime and to create their own toys as an important early start in preparation for school.

Norma continued to learn and was completing her GED and taking English classes. She credited AVANCE for her ongoing motivation to succeed.

Dallas



Case Study # 5

Patricia had the inner strength and motivation to seek out information about the AVANCE program as she had heard a lot of positive things from other participants. Upon her initial contact, Patricia knew this was a great opportunity for self-improvement. Her first encounter with the AVANCE program left her with a positive impression of the importance of socialization and a first-hand experience of getting to know other people.

Patricia learned to identify the needs children have, as often parents are so busy with their daily routines that it is easy to ignore the children. The program taught her the importance of interacting with children and reading to them: “Reading to my children every day was very important to build their literacy skills. I read to them and then we changed roles, and they read to me.” The need to socialize with them as well as with others was another area Patricia indicated she learned through AVANCE. She also learned from AVANCE’s training sessions, from making toys to learning English; she learned from nutritionists, medical doctors and police officers.

With her newly formed skills, Patricia volunteered at her children’s school and eventually held leadership roles in the school’s PTA, becoming its treasurer and president. Because of strong support from AVANCE at a critical time, Patricia transformed her life. AVANCE helped Patricia recover from depression after the death of her son and continued as a strong parent for her two remaining daughters. Patricia was proud of her daughters’ success. Her youngest girl just graduated with honors and a full scholarship to a prestigious university in California, and her oldest planned to graduate within a year with a degree in education. Patricia continued her own education, so that someday she could become a teacher. Patricia summarized her experience in AVANCE: “Mi experiencia fue algo maravilloso porque la verdad yo estaba pasando por un mal momento. Yo estaba en depresión, entonces, esto me ayudó a ver la vida de otra manera. A ver que dondequiera hay personas con necesidades igual que yo y hay personas que te apoyan; no estás sola. La educadora de padres y las maestras siempre estuvieron listas para escucharme y se ofrecieron a ayudarme; entonces los problemas se ven de otra manera. Yo cambié mi vida totalmente con mis hijos, cambié como yo era, le dedico más tiempo de calidad, no solo cantidad, y les he inculcado a mis hijos que la educación es lo primero. [My experience was marvelous, because truly I was going through a rough time. I was depressed and [AVANCE] helped me see life in a new way. I saw that everywhere there are people with needs just like me, and there are others that offer support; you are never alone. The teachers were always there, ready to listen, and offered to help and support me. You can look at problems in a new way. I completely changed my life with my children, and now I give them quality, not just quantity, time, and I instilled in them that education comes first.]”

Dallas



Case Study # 6

Rocío completed the nine-month AVANCE program in 2008. Her son was only 3 years old when she participated in the program. She learned about AVANCE at her child's school, where the program was highly recommended.

AVANCE encouraged a love of reading and the habit of reading daily, which she continued with her other children. Before AVANCE, she read to them in Spanish; after AVANCE they read books together in both English and Spanish. This love of reading extended to the whole family and was reflected in her son's desire to be in theater and act out stories. The program also taught Rocío other important leadership skills, such as good communication, patience and socialization that helped her eventually become a valuable volunteer at AVANCE.

At AVANCE, Rocío was encouraged to further her own education and become more involved in her children's school community and the PTA. She was motivated to continue studying, eventually completing her GED and entering community college. And she was looking forward to entering a university to advance her education further.

The time Rocío spent in AVANCE changed her deeply. Her self-esteem and self-confidence grew along with her communication skills, which helped her improve her relationships within her family and the community. AVANCE also helped her manage the family's finances. The powerful leadership skills she learned at AVANCE continued to yield positive returns and taught her to look out for others in her community, such as helping bring out a petition to improve their local streets.

At the time of the interview, Rocío was a recognized leader in her community, and she credited AVANCE for giving her the strong preparation and practical skills that, in her own opinion, were very useful for her, her family, relatives and friends.

Houston



Case Study # 1

Hilda was an active participant in AVANCE for about nine months during 2003 when her older child was 3 years old. Having recently arrived from Mexico with her husband, she spoke no English and was not interested in continuing her education. Her son had participated in Head Start, but since it did not provide daycare services for her young daughter, it was difficult for her to attend. Hilda wanted to take part in the English and parenting programs that AVANCE provided.

Hilda attributed her renewed outlook on parenting to the training she received through AVANCE, including toy making, early childhood development classes and home visits. Before, she was doing everything for her son, but through the classes, she understood that her children needed to learn how to be more independent.

When Hilda enrolled in AVANCE, she had only completed middle school. At AVANCE she continued her education and obtained a GED. After that, she set the goal to go to college to become a teacher or counselor and work with children. Learning English through part of the AVANCE program helped build her confidence and self-esteem and fueled her desire to help others. Upon learning that many children in her son's school had non-English speaking parents, Hilda reached out and began volunteering at school to help develop their speaking skills. Acquiring a new language also helped Hilda's literacy development and encouraged her to read to her children at least 30 minutes each day. Hilda credited her son's kindergarten readiness with his participation in AVANCE.

Hilda sharpened her English skills and started a small car sales business of her own. She was proud that she could contribute to her family income. Hilda believed that AVANCE support gave her a new perspective on life: "Dreams can come true, but it's in each of us to decide how much we want to succeed."

Houston



Case Study # 2

Before coming to AVANCE, Lorena was just looking for a place for her son to attend preschool. Lorena then heard from her friends about all the programs AVANCE had to offer. She quickly discovered a treasure of ideas. Her participation in AVANCE from 2003 to 2005 consisted of attending different classes and receiving a substantial amount of information on how parents can help to educate their children.

Lorena was impressed with AVANCE's sound ideas on child development, how to correct behavior, and how to bring up children in a positive environment. She discovered the joy of learning to make educational toys and use her homemaking skills for educational and financial purposes. Lorena expanded her circle of friends at AVANCE and became deeply involved in community events. She also developed a small business on the side, making tamales for profit. Learning how to help her child read influenced their continued love and passion for reading.

AVANCE heightened Lorena's motivation to study and earn a degree in child development. Before AVANCE, Lorena had not yet secured her documents to live legally in the United States. Now, she has them as well as solid AVANCE experiences and skills that have empowered her to move ahead in life. At the time of the interview, she was enrolled in college pursuing her goals to master English and get into the field of child development.

Houston



Case Study # 3

María first became involved with AVANCE in 2004 with her middle daughter, then again during 2009 through 2011 with her youngest two daughters. All three of María's daughters attended AVANCE programs. She recalled developing a desire to learn more and more each day. Though she had obtained a GED in Mexico, she felt that acquiring a certificate in the United States would afford her more opportunities. Through AVANCE, she completed her GED in addition to taking English and computer classes.

For years, María had sought out books that could help her with ideas for educating her three young children. AVANCE gave her an opportunity to attend classes on a variety of topics, like early childhood development and child's safety and parenting. Not only was she able to learn this valuable information, but her husband also attended and they participated together as a couple. María remembered participating in several AVANCE activities, including conferences, toy making, home visits, speaking engagements and educational field trips. After these events, María and her husband engaged in further discussions together and investigated more about what they were learning to be able to decide for themselves how best to use this new knowledge in good parenting practices for their family.

AVANCE motivated María to continue striving for progress, and she was working on mastering English in preparation for entering college studies. She believed that her AVANCE experience has positively affected her children's early learning and would continue to impact the dedication they had to doing their best in school. The foundational skills they received in AVANCE programs, such as sharing, following rules and practicing good manners, stayed with them as they grow older. She felt that AVANCE has taught her girls to be self-disciplined, take their studies seriously and always give their best effort.

María stayed informed and involved in what was happening at her children's school to help support their learning at home. Thanks to AVANCE, reading became part of their routine. For María, education was an honor and a privilege they cherished.

Austin



Case Study # 1

Josefina participated in the AVANCE program for nine months in 2002 along with two of her four children. Her son was the child most involved in the program. She became interested in the program because she had heard that it helped children learn skills that other children in their childhood development center were learning, and she thought it would help herself learn English as well.

In Mexico, Josefina worked as a nurse and hoped to continue that line of work in the United States. Josefina and two of her four children enrolled in AVANCE courses, making crafts, learning English as a second language and taking parenting and GED classes. The whole family also enjoyed and benefitted from their field trips in the program.

Although Josefina believed she was already a good mother, AVANCE helped her improve her skills even further. She learned that parents and teachers needed to collaborate much more in educating children together. Josefina and her husband both credited AVANCE for improving their confidence, and each has started their own business. At the time of the interview, they felt their children were better because of their involvement with AVANCE. Josefina has promoted AVANCE programs and has recommended them to others whenever possible. She described her experience as “Excellent!”

Austin



Case Study # 2

María, a mother of eight children, participated in the AVANCE program in 1999 for nine months with one of her children. She discovered the program as she prepared for her citizenship classes. Shortly after graduating from the AVANCE program, she moved to a new residence and could not continue participating in AVANCE activities.

María learned about becoming more independent, and her little daughter learned to feel safer and more secure as she also became more independent. She also learned to socialize with her young peers and share with others. AVANCE gave both mother and daughter important life skills that were transformative. The parenting program provided moral support, assistance, transportation, information and opportunities to do activities together. Because she had to work two jobs, María had been previously unable to further her own education and complete high school.

María continued to pursue her lifelong learning approach and enrolled in classes to learn English, a necessity for most jobs. Eventually she will obtain her GED, she said. AVANCE helped María build her “character and self-esteem,” resulting in an improved sense of self-assurance and becoming “a better human being in general,” she said. AVANCE helped her to make a radical break from her past unhealthy relationships. She emerged stronger, rejecting those prior abusive relationships and learned to value herself for the accomplished person she could be on her own.

AVANCE also taught her she could support her children as a successful single parent. After her participation in the AVANCE program, María understood the importance of making her own decisions, and that has provided stability for her family, both in her relationships and with her children. María helps others whenever she can through her involvement in PTA. She attributed her success to the AVANCE programs, which helped her develop communication skills and build character.

Austin



Case Study # 3

Nancy, a mother of two children, was a participant in the AVANCE program for nine months in 1999 with her oldest child. The youngest was only a few months old at the time she enrolled in the program. The program offered Nancy many opportunities to acquire new knowledge, which then translated into increased self-confidence in her role as a parent. As a result of participating in the AVANCE program, Nancy understood how important it was to always strive to improve herself through education, learning new skills and helping others.

During home visits, the AVANCE team taught Nancy how to read to and engage in meaningful, age-appropriate learning activities with her oldest as well as her younger children. As a result of participating in the parenting program, Nancy came to understand how important education was. Her self-confidence increased. Her patience grew, as she learned strategies to deal with anger and refrain from reacting negatively with her children when she was upset or frustrated because of her own personal issues. AVANCE also helped Nancy to learn how to recognize the causes of her infant's cry and how to walk away before physically responding to a child in anger. She learned how to tap into her own calmness and to resolve issues that could trigger a negative reaction and escalate a conflict with a child. Nancy proudly attributed the success of her current work as a nanny to the classes she took at AVANCE. One suggestion she had was perhaps offering classes to learn to work with adolescents as well.

Nancy understood how her knowledge can influence her service to the community and influence the lives of other children through her work. She continued to apply and share her knowledge by volunteering at school and helping the teacher work with student groups, using creative play, flash cards to teach math skills and translating in English for Spanish-speaking students. Another way in which Nancy used what she had learned in AVANCE was by sharing some of her newly-learned skills and understanding with others who might be going through the same issues she had before enrolling in AVANCE. In this way, she motivated struggling friends. All of these acts of service were a direct result of learning how to be a better person at AVANCE, regardless of one's level of education.

Austin



Case Study # 4

Linda was a first-time mother when she completed the AVANCE program in 2006. She participated in the program again in 2008 with her second child. Linda found out about the program from someone who knocked on her door. She was immediately interested because she was going through a depressive time in her life. At a minimum, she thought, it would be distracting to get out of the house.

From her first day, she instantly liked the program and embraced its philosophy enthusiastically, participating in the parenting, nutrition and child development classes as well as the couple sessions that benefitted her whole family tremendously. At AVANCE, her daughter learned how to be more independent and developed emotionally. Soon, Linda snapped out of her depression as she began to see the positive transformation within her family. As her understanding of early childhood development grew, so did her patience.

Linda's daughter learned to interact with peers at the AVANCE early childhood learning center. Along with her improved socialization, her daughter learned invaluable skills that would make her ready for school, such as learning the alphabet, the numbers, and how to color and use scissors.

Linda learned how to work closely together with her husband to raise their children well. She learned about social programs offered in the community that could benefit her entire family, such as how to locate a doctor and apply for Medicaid. Through AVANCE, she also learned that organizing her life and dedicating quality time with her children ensured a time and place for everything without sacrificing work or marital relationships. AVANCE classes and guest speakers helped build her sense of self-worth.

To close the interview, Linda shared her dream of pursuing a master's degree in sociology to help other families in the community who seemed to be losing their Latino roots and traditions. She continued to be actively involved in her children's education by volunteering at school and meeting with teachers at least once a week to check progress. She also helped them at home in any way that can support their learning and complement the school work. Linda highly recommended AVANCE and was grateful for the support she received from this organization – the first to help her climb out of depression and improve herself as a mother and as a person.

El Paso



Case Study # 1

Beatriz participated in the AVANCE PCEP in 2006 for nine months. She came back to AVANCE in the summer of 2007. During this time, she had two young children, both of whom participated with her in the program. She attended a variety of early childhood development and parenting sessions, and participated in several field trips. Her children participated in the early childhood developing classes and enjoyed the nutritious meals served. She appreciated the transportation AVANCE provided. The two specific services her children benefited from the most were the speech therapy sessions and the activities to alleviate their separation anxiety.

Being with other parents in mutual support and learning at AVANCE made a long-lasting impression on Beatriz. AVANCE was “an enlightening life experience,” where she discovered herself, her feelings and her ability to relate to others and use her communication skills to build a stable and loving family environment. Beatriz and her husband received couple’s support from AVANCE that continued to help the couple work together as a family in their natural stone and marble business. Beatriz loved the English classes and was thrilled with the idea of getting educated while her children were at her side.

Central to the education she received at AVANCE was the path on how to be involved in their children’s education. She learned specific activities, child development and critical parenting skills. Through AVANCE, Beatriz learned patience and how to discipline by understanding children’s emotions and conceptual development. Beatriz has continued to be involved in her children’s education and aspired to obtain her own professional degree. As a result of her AVANCE experience, Beatriz was inspired to learn, and she was proud to reflect upon the value of spending quality time with her family.

El Paso



Case Study # 2

María participated in AVANCE for nine months in 2003 and then extended her stay until 2005, for a total of two years. She and her husband had three children, but only one participated in AVANCE. María had always wanted to get out of the house to do and learn new things. She was especially motivated to find what she searched for when her son first went into kindergarten. María learned about AVANCE at her son's school where the program was operating.

With support from AVANCE, María strengthened her inner self and helped convince her husband that her place was not only in the home, but was also helping others. AVANCE constituted a profound influence on her interpersonal relations at home and with her children: "It was very beautiful, and I won't forget it." Because of the strong foundation from AVANCE, María was mastering her English and aspired to complete her GED. She developed a strong work ethic and began to volunteer. She eventually received training that led her to become a certified volunteer in her school district.

AVANCE taught María that when she did not know how to do something, she could just learn it rather than withdraw. This powerful lesson changed her perspective in life, and she gained the confidence that empowered her to discover her potential and do what she wanted most. In reflecting on her experience, María explained that all of her children benefitted from AVANCE, not just her 6 year old who joined her in the program. The impact of her participation was still evident, as she communicated and advocated for another son in high school and collaborated with teachers in encouraging him to stay in school and excel in his classes.

Conclusions, Findings and Recommendations

AVANCE is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit parent-child education and family support organization headquartered in San Antonio that has provided innovative education and family support services to predominantly Hispanic families in disadvantaged communities since 1973. Dedicated to promoting school readiness and supporting family engagement, AVANCE serves as a national model and a best practice reference for parenting education and early childhood education for parents, teachers, researchers and the general public. AVANCE's signature Parent-Child Education Program (PCEP) gives parents tools to become active participants in their child's life while providing children, zero to 3 years of age, with the education needed to become prepared and engaged students.

AVANCE contracted with the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) to conduct an external impact evaluation of the PCEP for parents who graduated from the program between the years 1999 through 2006. The evaluation involved interviewing these participants by telephone and face-to-face during several months, from April to August 2013. The evaluation was designed to address the following overarching question: *How does the AVANCE PCEP affect two-generation (parent/child) behavior change in the areas of education and socio-economic status?*

The evaluation was designed to answer this question from a variety of perspectives, which are presented in this summary organized in three main areas: findings, recommendations and concluding remarks.

Findings

This section first lists general findings regarding AVANCE PCEP, its target population, the sample, and the processes involved in conducting the evaluation. Second, to directly answer the research question, the study addressed the following five discrete focus areas pertaining to the AVANCE graduates and their children: (1) knowledge of child development and parenting skills, (2) support for two-generation education and growth, (3) employment and income levels, (4) homeownership and entrepreneurship, and (5) participant perceptions about barriers limiting program participation, lasting program impact on them and their families, and suggestions for program improvement. Finally, findings pertaining to the case studies are included at the end.

General Findings

- AVANCE PCEP is a two-generation program that seeks to advance parents and primary caregivers and their infants so that (a) parents increase their knowledge and confidence about their child-rearing skills and personal abilities, and (b) their infants attain optimal development and are ready for school.
- Young (below 30 years old), minority (98 percent Hispanic), economically distressed (37.1 percent earn less than \$20,000 a year), and under-educated (60.8 percent did not complete high school) mothers constitute the majority of AVANCE PCEP participants.
- This external evaluation was based on a sample of 199 mothers who mirror the socio-economic, ethnic and educational characteristics of AVANCE target population.
- The evaluation involved quantitative methods (using data from an extensive telephone survey of participants and a database created with their historic data) and qualitative methods (using data derived from participants' face-to-face in-depth interviews and information from an archival review of program documents).

Knowledge of Child Development and Parenting Skills

- Most mothers (98.5 percent) participated in parenting lessons and activities designed to increase their knowledge and preparation to understand and apply early childhood development concepts and practices.
- Most mothers and their children (90.3 percent) participated in AVANCE early childhood development activities where mothers could practice their new understanding and skills.
- With 637 children, these 199 mothers had substantial opportunities to apply child development and parenting knowledge and skills in an average of between three and four children, most of whom were in their adolescent years at the time of the interviews.
- The 199 AVANCE mothers had 454 children at the various levels of the K-16 educational continuum, representing 89.5 percent of children who would be predicted based on their age to be attending K-12 and 87.6 percent who would be predicted to be attending K-16.
- With a K-12 attrition rate of 10.5 percent, the AVANCE family's students had a lower attrition rate than the statewide rate for Hispanic students in Texas, which was 33 percent, according to the 2012-13 IDRA Texas public school attrition study. Moreover, the

AVANCE family attrition rate (10.5 percent) was lower than the Texas attrition rate for all students (25 percent).

- More than 93 percent of the mothers indicated that their children were school-ready when entering school. Of those, almost 91 percent credited AVANCE with helping them get their children ready for school.
- Regarding the children's performance in school, 87.8 percent of the mothers reported that their children were doing *above average* (good) or *excellent* (top of the class).
- Mothers (79.4 percent) reported that their children received awards from the school, such as Honor Roll, Perfect Attendance, and Citizenship Award.
- Mothers (75.8 percent) reported that their children were actively involved in extra-curricular activities at their schools, including athletics, gymnastics and indoor sports; school band, choir and orchestra; baseball, basketball, football, soccer and volleyball teams; music appreciation and lessons; and academic and science clubs.

Support for Two-Generation Education and Growth

- AVANCE offered or supported participants' furthering their education, including citizenship classes (6.7 percent), college courses (9.7 percent), GED classes (26.1 percent), bilingual education (28.2 percent) and ESL classes (31.8 percent).
- Most participants (69.6 percent) reported that they speak English *fairly well* or *very well*, and many (44.8 percent) indicated that AVANCE helped them improve their English mastery.
- Mothers improved their education since graduating from AVANCE; the number of mothers with higher education degrees increased from six to 19, an improvement of 216.7 percent, while the number of mothers with less than high school education decreased from 103 to 81 or 21.4 percent.
- Mothers improved their education in proportion to their initial attainment. Most mothers (59.1 percent) who were below high school before their participation in AVANCE, completed a GED certificate; on the other hand, most mothers (56.3 percent) with a high school diploma before participating in AVANCE, completed a higher education degree.
- AVANCE provided important practical guidance through several activities to help mothers with the education of their children. Two of these activities were toy-making

classes and field trips. Most mothers (95.3 percent) made toys that they used to instill in their children important concepts about the world, their sensory perception as well as their feelings. Many mothers (63.4 percent) participated in field trips organized to acquaint them with the resources available in the community.

Employment and Income Levels

- At the time of their graduation from AVANCE, more mothers were employed (29.5 percent) than when they entered AVANCE (17.1 percent). The employment quality was also higher – 17.6 percent of the mothers’ employment was full time after leaving AVANCE, compared to 6.2 percent at the time of seeking its services.
- The general trend toward employment improvement continued long after mothers left AVANCE. At the time of the interviews, the employed proportion had increased to 38.8 percent (compared to 29.5 percent when they graduated from AVANCE) – of these, 23.8 percent were full time (compared to 17.6 percent when they graduated from AVANCE).
- The general income distribution did not change from the time of enrollment to the time of the interviews because most of the improvement happened at the lowest levels of the salary scale, that is, to the families that needed it the most. In other words, most families continued to be at the lowest income levels, but more families were employed earning some salary.
- Mothers were very appreciative of the skills they gained in AVANCE that helped them find employment. These skills included improved self-esteem and self-confidence, better communication, and improved ability to work with others – all highly valued skills in the workplace.

Homeownership and Entrepreneurship

- The data showed a clear trend toward increased homeownership and reduced renting and other arrangements from the time the mothers were at AVANCE to the present. Before leaving AVANCE, 66.7 percent of the mothers rented their home, and 11.5 percent had other arrangements. At the time of the interviews, these proportions decreased to 42.2 percent and 4.7 percent, respectively. Homeownership, on the other hand, increased from 21.9 percent before mothers graduated from AVANCE to 53.1 percent at the time of the interviews.

- The homeownership improvement trend was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). The number of families who rented homes decreased by 36.7 percent, the number of families who made other living arrangements also decreased substantially by 59.1 percent, and the number of families who owned their own homes more than doubled with an increase of 142.9 percent.
- At the time of the interviews, two-thirds of mothers (66.1 percent) did not have health insurance; only one-third (33.9 percent) had health insurance. The percentage of AVANCE participants who had health insurance (about one third) remained remarkably similar regardless of their level of homeownership.
- About 17.8 percent of mothers became entrepreneurs, and 14.1 percent still have their businesses now.
- More than half of the mothers (53.7 percent) were involved in their community since graduating from AVANCE. Mothers attributed AVANCE for helping them become leaders in their communities and for their increased involvement in their children's schools and other community institutions, such as the church.
- Mothers have been involved in the community in a variety of ways: 46.3 percent have been involved with their children's school; 20 percent with their local church; 10.5 percent continued to be involved with their local AVANCE chapters; 7.4 percent have been involved with their communities by informally interacting with their neighbors; and a few were involved with their local libraries, nursing homes, or through United Way or the HIPPPY program.
- Mothers thanked AVANCE for the skills they learned that improved their homeownership and entrepreneurship status. Some of those skills included managing their finances, improved self-concept, and improved communication skills that aided their participation with their community to the point that some mothers became public speakers.

Barriers, Lasting Effects and Suggestions for Improvement

- Fewer than one third (29.0 percent) of the mothers indicated that AVANCE could have helped them better. In other words, most mothers (more than 70.0 percent) felt that AVANCE had done everything they could to help them. Participants in the face-to-face interviews were asked to expand on the barriers to participation, but the barriers they

mentioned were dealing with their own personal situations (English proficiency, child care for some of their children, etc.).

- Nearly 90 percent (88.1 percent) of the mothers indicated that their participation in AVANCE helped them build their self-esteem.
- When mothers were asked about the impact AVANCE had on their lives, they provided a multi-page list of positive effects. The main idea was that AVANCE had a life-changing impact on most mothers. It educated them with the knowledge they needed to raise their children well and provided skills they needed to improve their lives.
- Regarding the impact AVANCE had on their children’s lives, mothers most frequently stated that the program prepared their children for school academically and socially (45.8 percent). Mothers indicated that AVANCE improved their children’s attitude and behavior, that their children learned to be more independent and to communicate effectively with both their peers and adults, that they gained a sense of joy and confidence, and that the children’s English improved as did their general development.
- When mothers were asked about the best thing AVANCE did for them and their families, three concepts permeated their answers: parenting, communication, and family relationships – representing a combined frequency of 60.9 percent in the content analysis. The mothers indicated that AVANCE helped them not only be better parents but also how to communicate with their children and their husbands, which resulted in improved family unity, often saving their families from possible dissolution. Other things mothers mentioned most frequently were supporting the mothers’ education and their children’s education (18.6 percent), providing basic economic support when they most needed it (5.4 percent), and helping them set and achieve goals for them and their families (4.7 percent).
- Regarding suggestions for program improvement, participants wanted the program to last longer or allow participants to repeat it, they wanted more classes and more activities, and they wanted them to be offered more often and in more convenient schedules. This was echoed by the face-to-face interviews. They also wanted more classes, particularly English and GED, that they be held more often and in all the chapter centers.

Case Study Findings

- Most mothers came to AVANCE through one of three routes: (a) following the advice of a friend or family member who knew AVANCE or had participated in it, (b) recruited to AVANCE by a staff member who visited them at home, or (c) sought an organization that could help them and chose AVANCE.
- Most mothers came to AVANCE because they wanted to know more about parenting but were positively surprised that AVANCE provided much more than that.
- Mothers enjoyed the safe and supportive environment provided by AVANCE.
- Mothers learned about parenting and child development, but they were even more impressed by what they learned about themselves – that they could have successful lives, have good relationships with their children and spouses, and be leaders both at home and in their communities.
- They learned new ways of helping their children to be successful at school by helping them at home and involving themselves with the school by forming partnerships with teachers.
- Mothers learned new skills that enabled them to find jobs or explore new opportunities, such as creating small businesses or starting community projects.
- New skills learned include setting stretched but attainable goals, improved communication ability, and using organization and planning tools.
- Mothers gained a sense of self-worth and regained confidence in themselves.

Recommendations

AVANCE participants were generally satisfied with their experience with the Parent-Child Education Program. The following recommendations for program improvement were gleaned from interviews with participants and analyses of the data. As was the case with the findings, we first provide some general recommendations and then list specific recommendations by the focus areas that served as the organizational framework for the evaluation report.

General Recommendations

- AVANCE PCEP is an excellent program that addresses an urgent need in our society – that of distressed, young parents requiring support and guidance to raise the next generation of well-adapted U.S. citizens so they can fill the halls of universities and research institutions, the offices of corporations and other organizations, and the positions of responsibility at local, state and national government. We recommend that AVANCE continue implementing the PCEP as it is needed and it is successful fulfilling those needs.
- A utility-based evaluation plan would help program staff in obtaining continuous evaluation data to inform a data-driven approach to critical decision-making. Consider instituting a process for using program formative and summative assessment data to periodically reflect, assess, plan and take necessary actions to ensure that the various programs collectively and individually are targeting the needs of the community it serves.
- Use the evaluation findings as a needs assessment to inform AVANCE work and to engage future clients and collaborators that have a vested interest in families.
- Consider conducting or formalizing “exit interviews” with participants as an integral part of the evaluation process to determine what worked, what did not work, and what can be improved upon.

Knowledge of Child Development and Parenting Skills

- In addition to learning about child development and parenting skills, many mothers reported that their AVANCE experience constituted a journal of self-discovery. Perhaps AVANCE could add to their recruitment strategies an element that emphasizes this aspect of the program effects on participants.
- Engage AVANCE in community revitalization projects as an education partner emphasizing the benefits of family and child development as the foundation of a better and more prosperous community with greater employment opportunities and choices.
- Continue or increase AVANCE’s interface with other early childhood development centers and schools as a source of referrals to programs.
- Consider providing mothers with specific home lesson plans and activities geared toward encouraging bilingual language utilization and readiness for early reading.

Support for Two-Generation Education and Growth

- Become a part of the preK-20 education pipeline and establish relationships that will enable parents and children to make a smoother transition from AVANCE to higher education.
- AVANCE could entertain the possibility of becoming a community-based support to include academic and psychosocial counseling to help parents deal with barriers to higher education.
- Since college-going has been expressed as a goal in many case studies, parents could benefit from supportive materials related to setting high expectations for college and early planning for next steps to college and career attainment. Educational resource materials to support college planning, expectations, financing and budgeting would be beneficial for participants and their children, especially at early ages.
- Personal relationships and consistent listening emerged as frequent themes. Consider expanding counseling and psychological support for participants through direct services or referrals to other agencies.
- Consider or increase the frequency of site visits to local colleges, universities and trade schools to encourage the pursuit of higher education. Some mothers were impressed by the few campuses site visited that were offered and recommended more of them.
- Reinforce pathways to college and work classes by demystifying the application processes and providing supportive materials and guides for parents.

Employment and Income Levels

- Consider entering into relationships with employment agencies and human resources departments of partner institutions, such as school districts and other non-profit organizations.
- Assess demand for skills at the local, state and national economy and provide access to this information through the AVANCE website.
- Provide training in becoming financially independent and engage local resources to enhance the capacity of families to enter the workplace or further their education.
- Consider interfacing and making referrals to other organizations and programs, such as Transitions to Teaching, for those participants who had previously taught or held licenses

in Mexico or other countries. Reviews of credentials might expedite their transition into similar professions in the United States.

Homeownership and Entrepreneurship

- Provide opportunities for parents in the AVANCE program to shadow successful business persons.
- Create a corps of business mentors or engage the Small Business Administration to mentor and help parents explore entrepreneurship opportunities, access capital for family entrepreneurs and navigate entrepreneurship.
- A considerable number of participants reported volunteering in their local school upon completion of the program. This relatively untapped group of leaders could be organized and supported through additional activities and educational classes, such as parent leadership training.
- Classes that help foster self-efficacy, financial planning and nutrition are excellent investments for the participants and their communities. Explore the possibility of linkages with additional local community resources for these.

Barriers, Lasting Effects and Suggestions for Improvement

- Target past participants to refer new clients. Connect with positive role models to provide motivation and pathways to success through their own personal testimonies in the guest speaker program. One way of doing this is through tapping prior AVANCE participants to give inspirational talks about their success after participation in the program.
- Build and maintain a network of support among AVANCE graduates.
- Use impact of results to market “Yo soy Avance.”
- Consider tapping local resources to identify volunteers for one-on-one personal mentors and/or 24-hour support for teen mothers or participants in need of additional socio-emotional support.
- The mothers indicated that AVANCE helped them to improve communication among all members of the family, which resulted in improved family unity, often saving their families from possible dissolution. This is an important finding that AVANCE should emphasize since divorce and family disintegration is an important problem in today’s society for which limited solutions have been offered.

Concluding Remarks

Through this evaluation of AVANCE PCEP, we wanted the numbers to tell the story of the program's impact on the participants in terms of their education and income, their children's success in school, and a general improvement in their lives. However, contacting those mothers to gather these numbers was a significant challenge. After 10 years, the evolution of the cellular and smart telephones, and high mobility, many of the participants had changed their telephone numbers. IDRA addressed this challenge by organizing and training a cadre of interviewers who made 7,541 calls to 3,885 families. Some participants were found through family members and friends, or they were contacted after work or on weekends. This extra effort paid off. It produced the essential numbers, in a sample of 199 participants, that enabled us to understand the changes in those participants' lives in an objective manner, as demonstrated in this report.

We also wanted the mothers to speak in their own voices about those changes. The face-to-face interviews were the conduit to this aim. This also was a challenge. Even in today's society where people freely share a great deal of information, it is not easy for people to share the often painful and difficult reasons that brought them to seek help from AVANCE. Many, who thought they could participate in the interviews, found out that they were not ready and canceled the interviews at the last minute or simply did not show up. But we persisted and personally interviewed 24 participants in their language of choice (Spanish or English). Most of these interviews were conducted in the city and site of the AVANCE chapters. This constituted a safe venue that stimulated participants' memories. In a few cases, we visited participants at their homes. These interviews provided a deeper understanding of the long-term impact the program had on participants. They were used not only to create the case studies but also used throughout the report to add meaning to the numbers.

This external evaluation combined the numbers (quantitative analysis) with the stories (qualitative analysis) to convey a detailed account of the program effects from a variety of foci – from childhood development to two-generation education, from employment and income levels to homeownership and entrepreneurship, from barriers limiting participation in the program to participants' perception of the best thing AVANCE did for them. It merged the numbers and statistics with the human dimension to produce a much richer understanding of the long-term effects that the AVANCE PCEP had on its participating mothers, their children and their families.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the gracious collaboration of the five AVANCE city chapters that participated in this evaluation, in particular, Ms. Sofia Casini, executive director the AVANCE Austin chapter, and Ms. Anne Thomas, executive director the AVANCE Dallas chapter, both of whom worked diligently to assure the successful completion of the face-to-face interviews. The staff at the AVANCE national office also provided their time in numerous meetings and shared their expertise with the evaluation team, in particular, Dr. Glendelia Zavala, who with her insightful questions and generous feedback, enhanced the evaluation process in general and the resulting documents in particular.

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Appendix

AVANCE Telephone Survey

A. Interviewer: _____

Call Attempts (Circle each attempt: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10) Date of Last Attempt: _____

Interview status: 1. In process 2. Partially completed 3. Completed 4. No interview possible

Contact Status:

1. Answering machine - left message
2. Answering machine - no message left
3. Answering service - unable to leave message
4. Call back (Use comments to specify call back time)
5. Hang-up
6. No answer
7. Non-working number - disconnected
8. Non-working number - fax number
9. Non-working number - incorrect area code
10. Non-working number - temporarily out of service
11. Non-working number - no longer in service
12. Refusal
13. Voice mailbox full
14. Wrong number

Interview Date: _____ Interview Time: from: _____ to: _____

Interview Type: 1. Home phone 2. Cell Phone

B. Participant's Contact and Identification Information

Preferred language for Interview: 1. English 2. Spanish

Interviewee's City: _____ Family Code: _____

Interviewee's First Name: _____ Last Name: _____ Age: _____

First Child's Name: _____ Current age: _____ Completed: _____

Second Child's Name: _____ Current age: _____ Completed: _____

Home phone No. _____ Cell Phone No. _____

Best phone for the interview: _____

C. Nature, Extent and Type of Relationship with AVANCE

When did you participate in AVANCE? Month: _____ Year: _____

As far as you can remember, did you and your child / children complete the 9-month parent-child program at AVANCE? Parent: 1. Yes 2. No Children: 1. Yes 2. No

(If some children completed the program, ask) How many children completed the program? _____

Approximately, how many months were you involved with AVANCE? _____ Months

In which of the following AVANCE classes did you participate after completing the parenting program?

__ GED __ Citizenship __ College courses __ Bilingual Education
__ English as a Second Language __ None __ Others; please indicate: _____

Did AVANCE help you to speak, read or write in English? 1. Yes 2. No

To what degree do you speak, read and write in English?

1. Not at all 2. Poorly 3. Fairly well 4. Very well

To what degree do you speak, read and write in Spanish?

1. Not at all 2. Poorly 3. Fairly well 4. Very well

D. PCEP Model Components

Did you participate in any of the following activities?

a. Toy Making

Did you make toys? 1. Yes 2. No

b. Parenting Sessions

Did you have parenting lessons? 1. Yes 2. No

c. Community speakers, library visit, other field trips

Did you participate in any community speaking sessions? 1. Yes 2. No

Did you participate in field trips (such as the library or grocery stores)? 1. Yes 2. No

d. Home Visits

Did AVANCE staff visit you at home? 1. Yes 2. No

e. Transportation

Did AVANCE pick you up? 1. Yes 2. No

f. Meals/snacks

Did you receive any meals/snacks? 1. Yes 2. No

g. Adult education (ESL, GED)

Did you participate in ESL classes? 1. Yes 2. No

Did you participate in GED classes? 1. Yes 2. No

h. Early childhood development (for the child)

Did you and your child (ren) participate in early childhood development activities?

1. Yes 2. No

If *No* to any of the above, why didn't you participate in them?

E. Education of Child (ren) after AVANCE

How many children do you have? _____ What are their ages? _____

How many still live at home with you? _____

How many of your children are attending (indicate corresponding school names below):

Elemen.____ Middle School____ High School____ Voc./Trade School____ College____

How is/are your child(ren) doing in school?

1. Poor (failing) 2. Fair (below average) 3. Average 4. Good (above average) 5. Excellent (top of class)

What honors has your child received (i.e. honor roll, attendance award, etc.)?

When entering school, was your child school ready? 1. Yes 2. No

If yes, did AVANCE help you prepare your child for school? 1. Yes 2. No

Has your child ever been retained (repeated a grade)? 1. Yes 2. No

If yes, what grade level?

Did/does your child have behavioral issues in school? 1. Yes 2. No

If yes, what issues?

Did/does your child participate in extra-curricular school activities? 1. Yes 2. No

If yes, what activities?

F. Education of Parent before and after AVANCE

What was your educational level before participating in AVANCE?

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Did not complete high school | 5. Completed community college (1-2 year institution) |
| 2. Obtained GED | 6. Completed university (4-year institution) |
| 3. Completed high school | 7. Completed graduate school |
| 4. Completed vocational\technical school | 8. Completed doctoral degree |

If you attended higher education before participating in AVANCE, what was your area/field of study?

Did you continue your education after graduating from AVANCE? 1. Yes 2. No

What is your current educational level?

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Did not complete high school | 5. Completed community college (1-2 year institution) |
| 2. Obtained GED | 6. Completed university (4-year institution) |
| 3. Completed high school | 7. Completed graduate school |
| 4. Completed vocational\technical school | 8. Completed doctoral degree |

If you obtained a degree, what is your current area/field of study? _____

Have you acquired any certificates, training or additional skills since you left AVANCE? If yes, which ones?

G. Participant's Current Life Status

What is your present occupation? _____

Before entering AVANCE, what was your employment status?

1. Unemployed 2. Self-employed 3. Employed Part Time 4. Employed Full Time

Immediately after exiting AVANCE, what was your employment status?

1. Unemployed 2. Self-employed 3. Employed Part Time 4. Employed Full Time

What is your current employment status?

1. Unemployed 2. Self-employed 3. Employed Part Time 4. Employed Full Time

In a rounded number, what's your current individual income level? _____

In a rounded number, what's your current household income level? _____

Do you have health insurance? 1. Yes 2. No

Regarding the place where you lived before leaving AVANCE, did you 1. Own 2. Rent 3. Other: _____?

And currently, do you 1. Own 2. Rent 3. Other: _____?

Have you ever started a business? 1. Yes 2. No Do you own a business now? 1. Yes 2. No

Do you have any of the following types of investments?

1. Stocks 2. Bonds 3. Rental properties 4. Acreage 5. Livestock
6. Other: _____

H. Overall AVANCE Assessment, Feedback and Follow-up

What impact did AVANCE have on your life? _____

What impact did AVANCE have on your child's (ren's) life (lives)? _____

What's the best thing AVANCE did for you or your family? _____

Did your participation in AVANCE build your self-esteem? 1. Yes 2. No

Besides AVANCE did you participate in any other parent education or parent-child program? 1. Yes 2. No

If yes, which one? _____

In your opinion, could AVANCE have helped you better? 1. Yes 2. No. If yes, how? _____

Since leaving AVANCE, have you been involved with your community in any way? 1. Yes 2. No

If yes, how? _____

Would you be interested in participating in a personal, face-to-face, in-depth interview along with your family regarding your experience with AVANCE?

1. Yes 2. No

Thanks for allowing us to interview you for this important project!

Please record time the interview ended.

AVANCE Case Study Guide

Introduction

IDRA is conducting a study on behalf of AVANCE about the families they served. We appreciate the opportunity to ask you a few questions regarding your experience with the AVANCE program.

Part 1: This set of questions explores your relationship with AVANCE.

1. You were involved in AVANCE around _____. Is that correct?
 - I notice that you spent ___ months in AVANCE; what prompted you to seek this help?
 - When did you last attend or get AVANCE support?
 - Have you ever volunteered at AVANCE or worked for AVANCE in any other way?
 - 1.1. Did you ever consider dropping out of AVANCE programs?
 - How did AVANCE help you stay in the program?
2. Our records show that _____ children participated with you in the program. Is that correct?
 - And the total number of children in the family is _____. Is this also correct?
 - How many of them received AVANCE services?
 - What services did they receive?
3. You were involved in these program components _____. Is that correct?
 - And, you were not involved in _____,
 - Why didn't you participate in these services?

Part 2: This set of questions explores AVANCE program impact on your family.

4. How would you describe your experience with AVANCE?
 - What did your typical session at AVANCE look like?
5. I notice that your level of education is _____.
 - Did your experience with AVANCE cause you to continue your education? Explain.
 - What level of education do you plan to reach? What are your educational goals?
 - What program component or activity influenced your educational decisions or outlook?
6. You indicated that AVANCE helped you (or did not help you) with your self-esteem. Tell me more about the ways that your experience at AVANCE helped you personally, such as:
 1. Your outlook at life
 2. Your level of self-confidence
 3. Discovering your potential
 4. Communicating with family members
 5. Creating new friendships

7. What impact did AVANCE have on the life of your child/ren?

- I notice that you indicated that your child/ren [did / did not] demonstrate readiness for school after participating in AVANCE.
 - Can you tell me more about this?
 - How did you determine readiness?
- You indicated that AVANCE helped / didn't help prepare your child for school.
 - If helped: In what ways AVANCE contributed to your child/ren's success?
 - What specific AVANCE activities were useful?
 - If didn't help: What could AVANCE have done?
- In general, did AVANCE help you become a better parent?
 - In what ways?
- Did AVANCE shape in any form the way you participate in your child's school

8. How involved were you or are you in your child/ren's education?

- Did you read to your child/ren when they were attending school? How often?
- Did they become active readers? Are they active readers now?
- Do you communicate with your child/ren's teacher? How often?
- Do you participate in any other school activities? Explain.

9. As a result of your participation in AVANCE, what can you report about your child/ren's:

1. School attendance
2. Honors received (see profile)
3. Passing rates on state academic tests
4. High school graduation rates
5. Higher education enrollment
6. College graduation rates
7. Employment status

10. I'm going to read a list of parenting skills tell me which ones you gained from participating in AVANCE?

1. Knowledge of child/ren's development
2. Spending quality time with your child
3. Setting goals for yourself
4. Going to the library
5. Setting goals for your family
6. Playing with your child/ren
7. Effective discipline
8. Talking with your child/ren
9. Homework skills
10. Setting high expectations for my child/ren

11. When your child left AVANCE, did s/he attend any other program, such as a childcare?

- If so, which one and for how long?
- How did that experience compare to AVANCE's?

12. How did AVANCE help prepare you for work or employment?
- What specific AVANCE programs or activities contributed to your success?
Eg. Toy-making, painting, field trips, library cards, others
 - Has your income improved as a result of new opportunities offered to you due to your new skills and life outlook?
 - I notice that you started or own a business. (See profile.)
 - Can you tell me more about it?
 - What stimulated you to do so?
 - What steps did you take to create your business?
 - You have investments in _____.
 - Did your experience in AVANCE help you with this in any way?
13. I notice that you have participated in your community. (See profile.)
- Did AVANCE influence you to become more active with your community?
 - You participate in _____.
 - Can you tell me about it?
 - Have you written any petition for a cause? Describe.
 - Do you help other people in need? Explain.

Part 3: This set of questions will help us to recommend ways to improve the program.

14. You indicated that the best thing AVANCE did for you or your family was _____.
- Can you tell me about that?
 - What was most useful about your experience with AVANCE?
 - What was least useful about your experience with AVANCE?
15. You indicated that AVANCE could / could not have helped you better.
- What made you say that?
 - Thinking back about your experience with AVANCE, what else could AVANCE have done or done differently to increase its positive impact on you and your child/ren?
16. Are there any skills you need to learn to continue to improve your life?
17. Do you still maintain contact with other AVANCE participants?
- Are you currently part of an AVANCE network?
 - Would you like to be part of a social network of AVANCE by participating in an online secured site?
18. Is there anything that we did not ask you about AVANCE that you would like to tell us?

Thanks you! We really appreciate time and effort you have given us to enrich this study.